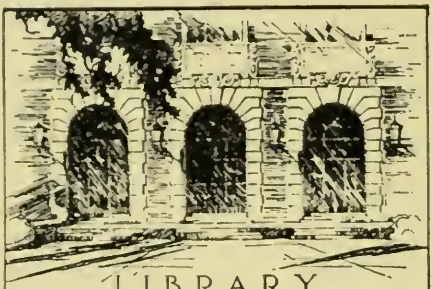
Two Pinches of Snuff

William Westall



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TWO PINCHES OF SNUFF.

BY

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TWO PINCHES OF SNUFF.

CHAPTER I.

THE ROBBERY.

"I SUPPOSE Roydon will be in Paris by this time?" said Herr Roth to John Verelst on the Monday morning after the Doctor's departure.

"Of course. Why, he left on Thursday night."

"I thought he might perhaps be stopping somewhere on the way."

"I don't think he had any such intention. He took a through ticket—"

"*Ach Gott!* Do you know what I think?"

"No; what do you think, Herr Roth?"

"That he won't stay in Paris at all, but go straight on to Manchester and get the money for that bill from his cousin, Mr. Balder."

"I don't think he will. Billy Balder is not the man to lend money to anybody —except, of course, to solvent customers on good security."

"In that case I fear the bill will not be paid, Herr Verelst. I don't believe he can raise more than two or three thousand marks on those nick-nacks he fancies so valuable. I once saw them, and they did not look much worth."

"And if the bill is not paid, what then?"

"I shall have it protested, and instruct my lawyers to enforce payment. And that I gave Roydon clearly to understand."

"He knows that non-payment of the

bill means a compulsory sale of his books."

"Exactly."

"You may be sure then the bill will be paid. He will raise the money somehow."

"He will try hard, I daresay. But I doubt it. However, we shall soon see. Time will be up in a fortnight. I shall stay in to-day, Herr Verelst; so you and the others can go out."

Business begins early in Dresden, and about noon there is a general cessation of work for the important purpose of restoring exhausted nature by a copious repast, washed down with libations of lager beer, and followed, in most instances, by a soul-soothing smoke. Altogether an affair of almost two hours, during which time many establishments "shut up shop" entirely, since most people being engaged in eating hardly anybody goes in for shopping. But

Herr Roth, being a banker, could not well comply with this all but universal usage. Customers did occasionally drop in during *Esszeit* (eating time), especially English and American travellers who had circular notes to change, and were not conversant with German ways, and it would never do for depositors to find the doors closed against them. So it was arranged that there should always be somebody in the bank—somebody competent to answer questions and transact business—either Herr Roth himself, Anspach, Verelst, or one of the senior clerks.

But the stayer-in was not allowed to starve; he had his dinner sent in from a neighbouring *Speisehaus*, and, as a rule, his enjoyment of it was seldom disturbed by chance callers.

Herr Roth's came from the Hotel de Saxe or the Bellevue, and there nearly

always came with it a long-necked bottle of Niersteiner or other Rhine wine.

As Verelst and Anspach left the office on the day in question, the waiter who brought the viands was setting out the table in Herr Roth's room as carefully as he would have done had it been in the hotel, for the "old man" regarded eating as an important function, and insisted on having everything in proper order.

"We are going to the Krone," said Jack; "we shall be back about half-past two."

"All right. But don't hurry yourselves; three will be quite soon enough," answered the old man, kindly. "*Mahlziet!*" (meal-time, good appetite).

"*Mahlzeit!*" responded the others; and with that they betook themselves to the Krone restaurant, some seven or eight minutes' walk from the bank.

Anspach and Verelst were by no means the only diners; they had a score or more of famished companions, who ate as Germans only can, some shovelling in their food with knife and fork alternately; others cutting up the meat first, and, after laying down their knives, forking it in with their right hands, pretty much as haymakers fork hay into a barn. German table manners are about on a par with those of English colliers or Irish labourers.

When the meal was over—and it did not take long—pipes and cigars were lighted, coffee ordered, and while some of the men talked and played cards and dominoes, others played billiards or read newspapers. But talk was the principal distraction; and Verelst said that he learnt more German in the hour or two he spent at the Krone than during all the rest of the day. This day he must have made very marked

progress, for he practised diligently, making a terrible hash of genders and cases, and heedless of the fact that he was occasionally quite incomprehensible—rather to the surprise of Anspach, a taciturn, middle-aged man, with a bald head and big spectacles, for though Herr Verelst was not often in melancholy mood his spirits were seldom so high as they just then appeared to be. If the cashier had known that Herr Verelst was looking forward to a *tête-à-tête* with a certain *hübches mädchen* (pretty girl) about five o'clock p.m. his surprise would probably have been less. It is possible that he might not have been surprised at all.

Jack was popular with the frequenters of Krone—mostly bank clerks and such like—perhaps because he spent more money than they could afford to do—salaries in Germany being miserably low—

smoked better cigars, and showed none of that *hauteur* which is supposed to be a characteristic of Englishmen on their travels. Several of them had served in the late war, and sometimes, when they were fighting their battles over again, he would stand a bottle or two of wine. This he did on the present occasion, and there is no telling how long the talk would have gone on if Anspach, a little before three, had not touched Verelst on the shoulder, and reminded him that it was time to be going. And then there was a general dispersion, for the others, like themselves, had to be back at their respective offices by three o'clock.

"*Ja wohl!*" (the German equivalent of "all right"), says Verelst; "let us be going. The old man may want to go out, and he is so good that it would be a shame to keep him waiting."

They reach the bank together, but Jack goes first up stairs—quickly, as he generally does, Anspach, who was rather rheumatical, following slowly.

Herr Roth is not in his room, and, rather to Jack's surprise, nobody is visible in the outer office. Still more to his surprise, the big safe is wide open.

"I say, Anspach—" he calls out.

"Good heavens! what is that?"

And he stops short, breathless, paralyzed, almost fainting with horror, for there, on the other side of the counter, lies, all in a heap, the body of Herr Roth, with a face like death, his grey hair dabbled with blood, and a stream of it welling from a terrible wound in his head.

"Murder! It is murder!" exclaims Anspach. "Somebody has killed the master and robbed the bank!"

"Fetch a doctor and the police this

instant, Anspach," says Verelst, recovering his presence of mind. "But, stay, I hear footsteps on the stairs. It's the other fellows coming back. Let one fetch a doctor and another inform the police; but charge them both on their lives to tell nobody else, or we shall have the place full of people. And he is not perhaps dead, after all. I think I can hear him breathe. Bring some water out of the other room and a table napkin, and—yes, the table-cloth. We cannot move him until the doctor comes, but we can do something."

Verelst has hardly spoken when the things asked for are brought, and, making a cushion of the table-cloth, he places it tenderly under Herr Roth's head, and then bathes it with the water.

"Poor old man! What fiend has done this?" cries Jack, as tears of pity run down his cheeks. "If I had him here—if

I only had him here! Poor old man! Poor Helenchen! And Frau Roth! It will break her heart."

In a few minutes comes a doctor, followed at a short interval by several policemen.

The doctor kneels down and examines the wounded man's skull.

"It is a fracture, and a bad one," he says, "made with some blunt instrument."

"But he is not dead; he breathes."

"Yes, but I fear he will never speak again. However, we must do our best. Send to the nearest hotel for a mattress and pillows; and when his wounds are dressed, we must have an ambulance, and transport him either to the hospital or his own home."

"His wife is an Englishwoman, and I am sure she would like to have him under her own care."

"As you think best. But somebody should prepare her. Turn the head a little on this side—there, gently. How did it happen? I don't quite understand."

Jack tells him, in a few words, all he knows.

"What have they taken? Ah, here come the gendarmes. Perhaps they will be able to find the villains. They cannot be far."

The first proceeding of the police was to post a man at the door to keep out the curious, who were already gathering in the street below. The other gendarmes then began to make inquiries, in which they were assisted by a man in plain clothes, whom Jack took to be a detective, and who arrived, a few minutes later, together with a second surgeon.

CHAPTER II.

AN ORDEAL.

"Is this the work of a thief, and, if so, what has he stolen?" was the first question that presented itself.

Anspach kept his provision of cash for the day in a strong drawer—fitted with a patent lock, under his own desk. The drawer opened without difficulty, showing that it had not been tampered with, and the cash was found to be intact.

Attention was then directed to the safe, which, as has already been mentioned, stood wide open. The keys—Herr Roth's keys, for Anspach had the other—were in

the lock. It seemed clear, then, that the safe had been opened by himself.

For what purpose?

In the upper part of the strong box were placed the more important books of account. In the lower part were two large iron drawers, in which the securities and a reserve of cash were kept.

Anspach unlocked the receptacle containing the cash. That, like the cash in his own drawer, was intact. But the security drawer, though closed, was not locked, and the moment it was opened Anspach expressed the belief that some of the securities it ought to contain had been abstracted.

To compare those that remained with the list in the "securities book" was the work of a few minutes.

"It is as I thought," says Anspach; all the *Stadt Obligationen* (municipal bonds) are

gone, and they are payable to bearer, and as negotiable as a bank-note."

"How much?" asks the detective.

"About 20,000 marks" (1000*l.*).

"Have you the numbers?"

"Surely. Here they are," putting his hand on the book.

"Let us have a list of them at once, please—half a dozen lists. We must notify every bank in the town of the robbery without a moment's delay, so that if the thieves attempt to negotiate the bonds they may be detained."

"You think there were two, then?" says Verelst.

"That's my opinion. Robberies of this sort are almost always worked by at least two. There was one very like it some time ago at Leipzig. The cashier of a money-changer's office had been left alone during the dinner hour. Two men came in and

offered a bond, or something or another, for sale, and while the cashier's attention was engaged with one of them, the other struck him down, and then they helped themselves to all they could lay hands on and made off."

"Were they caught?"

"The same day. The cashier was only stunned, and could give a description of the villains and particulars of the stolen property immediately, and the thieves were dropped upon while trying to change some foreign notes, not more than two hours after they were stolen."

"What I cannot understand is why the villains did not crib more while they were at it," puts in Jack; "they have not even taken all the securities; and in that other drawer, of which the key hangs in the safe, there are 60,000 marks in gold and notes, and it would not have been a very difficult matter to force Anspach's drawer and take the lot."

"You forget, sir, that in robberies of this sort time is everything. Somebody might come in; the thieves might be met on the stairs. You may be sure it was an affair of a very few minutes. On some pretext or other the villains got poor Herr Roth to open the safe and show them these bonds, and then, while one held him in talk, the other broke his skull with a blow from behind. Then the bonds were swept off the counter, and they made away with all speed."

"There you are mistaken," interposes one of the doctors. "The position of the body and the nature of the wound render it almost certain that Herr Roth, when struck down, was standing with his face to the murderer. It is likely enough, though, that he was stooping, for the force of the blow has been received by the parietal bone; the frontal is hardly involved at all."

"I am surprised at that," says the detective, thoughtfully; "are his hands hurt at all? When a man sees a blow coming he instinctively raises them to defend his head and face."

"They are not touched," answers the doctor, with a glance at Herr Roth's hands. "There is not a scratch or a mark of any sort on them."

"Strange! As you say, he must have been standing close to the counter when he fell, and if he was in a position to see the blow coming, he would surely step back to avoid it, or at least raise his hands. Do you think he will be able to answer a few questions—soon? It is very important for the ends of justice that he should."

"Not a doubt of it, Herr Detective," answers the doctor, drily. "But Herr Roth will be in no condition to answer questions for many a day to come—if

ever. What say you, Herr Colleague?" (to the other doctor, one of the first surgeons in Dresden).

The answer is to the point.

"He may go any moment."

"In that case there is no chance of getting a description of the murderers," says the detective, regretfully.

"At any rate not to-day, Herr Detective," answers the first doctor, sarcastically. "You will have to try some other means."

"The lists, the lists: are they ready, Herr Anspach?" asks the detective, without noticing the doctor's answer.

"Here they are: six of them," says Anspach.

The detective takes two copies himself, and despatches two of the gendarmes and two of the clerks to various banks and money-changer's offices, with instructions to inform them of the robbery, and order

anybody to be detained who should offer the stolen bonds for sale, or attempt otherwise to negotiate them.

"I shall go to several places myself," he adds. I only hope we shall not be too late. It must be a good hour, perhaps two, since the crime was committed."

By this time the mattress had come, and the doctors suggested that Verelst should go at once to Schiller Strasse to prepare Frau Roth for the arrival of her wounded and, as he believed, dying husband.

Jack complies, of course, but it is with a heavy heart, and as the droshky takes him at a fast trot over the Old Bridge and up the Haupt Strasse, he feels that he would a hundred times rather have ridden in the desperate cavalry charge at Mars-le-Tour, which one of the fellows at the Krone had just described to him, than face Frau Roth

with the evil tidings of which he is the bearer. He is rather glad Helenchen is away; her presence would make his task still more painful. Poor Helenchen! Why does he always think of her as "poor Helenchen"? And then he remembers for the first time his intention of going to Halbe Gasse. But that is nothing now. He will try to call at the Ashleys later on and tell Leah what has befallen.

The droshky arrives all too soon before the banker's house. The maid, who answers Jack's summons, tells him that Frau Roth is in the garden. He goes there, and finds the poor woman busy among her flower beds, and looking very happy and cheerful. Mathilde is in the summer-house, dressed up, and reading the inevitable French novel.

"Good-day, Frau Roth."

"Good-day, Herr Verelst," says the lady, seeming rather surprised; she did not expect to see Herr Verelst at that hour, particularly as Helenchen is away. (Frau Roth had quite made up her mind that it would be a match.)

When she looks at Jack a second time her surprise becomes fear, then terror, for his face is pale with suppressed excitement, and his whole bearing shows that something very serious has happened.

"What is it, Herr Verelst?" she cries. "What has gone wrong? Has Hermann been fighting again, and is he—is he—?"

"No," says Jack, rather glad of the respite this mistake affords him; "I don't think Hermann has been fighting, and I believe all is well with him."

"It is Helenchen, then. There has been an accident at Meissen—the railway—or, perhaps she is ill."

Jack shakes his head.

"Oh, it is my dear husband, then! he is ill—he has—tell me what it is, dear Mr. Verelst; tell me what it is—the worst—or I shall die—(clutching both his hands)—the worst, Mr. Verelst, the worst!"

"I will tell you the worst, dear Frau Roth, but you must prepare for a great shock. The bank was robbed while we were away at dinner, and your husband is very badly hurt; but, as I hope, not fatally."

"Oh, you are not telling me the worst, Mr. Verelst!" wails the stricken woman. "He is dead. Mathilde! Mathilde! thy father is dead!"

"No, no, I assure you he is not dead. They are bringing him home. You must make a room ready for him—if possible on the ground floor. He will require a great deal of care and attention. An ambulance

had been sent for when I left, and I daresay he will be here in an hour."

"Thank Heaven, my Heinrich is not dead, and while there is life there is hope! Yes, we will prepare a room, and he shall have every care and attention. He is not so very badly hurt, Mr. Verelst? You think he will live?"

"I hope so," answers Jack, evasively. "There are clever surgeons in Dresden, and I am sure everything will be done for him that can be done."

"Oh!" cries Frau Roth, again plunged into the depths of despair by this cold comfort, "what shall I do if my Heinrich dies? He has always been so good and kind, Mr. Verelst: so good and kind. We were married when I was barely eighteen, and could speak scarce a word of German, and he not much over twenty; and he has never spoken a cross word to me all my

life. We were so happy, and now they have killed him,—he who was so good to everybody, and never did an unkind act."

Here she was so much overcome that Verelst had to put his arm round her and lead her into the house. Mathilde behaved better than he had expected. She threw aside her French novel and her affectation, and for once in her life became quite natural.

"Oh, dear mother, don't let us despair!" she says. "The dear father still lives, and, please Heaven, he will be spared to us for many long years. And don't you hear what Herr Verelst tells us, that we must get a room ready? It would never do for him to come, hurt as he is, and for us not to be prepared."

This seemed to rouse Frau Roth, though it was very little they could do in the way

of preparation. But it was something to think they could, and then she asked Jack to tell them about the robbery, which he did as far as he was able, answering a multitude of questions. Then he asked if he could do anything for them. He was anxious to return to the bank to give what help he might, and learn if anything had been heard of the miscreants who had so cruelly used Herr Roth.

"If you would kindly telegraph to Helenchen we should be so much obliged," says Frau Roth, drying her tears. "And put it as gently to her as you can, dear Mr. Verelst; it will be a terrible shock for the child; her father is everything to her; and—could you let Hermann know? He will be very sorry."

"Certainly. You are sure there is nothing else you would like me to do?"

"I think not. Stay, there is one thing.

If it would not be too much trouble for you, I should be so much obliged if you could meet Helenchen at the station and bring her home. There is a train from Meissen about six o'clock; tell her to come by that. You will, won't you, Mr. Verelst? I shall never forget your kindness."

Jack would rather not have met Helenchen, but a request so pathetically put it was impossible even to think of refusing. He promises to do as Frau Roth wishes, and then, jumping into the droshky, hurries back to the office.

CHAPTER III.

ANOTHER ORDEAL.

When Verelst got back to Streu Gasse he found the door of the bank beset by an excited crowd, through which he had some difficulty in making his way. Herr Roth was still alive, and the doctors were now of opinion that he might linger some time, possibly several days, but they had little if any hope of his restoration to consciousness. His wound had been dressed, and he lay quite still on the mattress, breathing stertorously, like a man in an epileptic fit. An ambulance had been ordered from the infirmary, and the appliances for carrying him downstairs

—which owing to the banker's weight, would be a difficult and delicate operation —were already on the spot.

"It will be ticklish work," said one of the doctors. "The least accident might be fatal; but the Herr Banquier is a man of immense vitality, and I think we shall get him safely home. If you or I got a crack on the skull like that, Herr Verelst, it would almost certainly finish us at once. The Herr Amtsrichter (examining judge) wants to speak to you, I think."

The Herr Amtsrichter, a serious and self-important looking little man, attired in black broadcloth, was the magistrate charged with the investigation of the crime, and with a view to the preparation of his report he wanted to ask Jack a few questions and put down his answers. This was very soon done, for Jack had, unfortunately, little to tell that could

throw light on the affair. When he had finished answering, Verelst reversed the process, and asked the Herr Amtsrichter whether anything like a clue had been found.

"As you say," returned the magistrate, "something like a clue; but nothing more, I fear. The bonds were negotiated, as it it would appear, within half an hour of the robbery. At any rate, before three o'clock."

"Where?"

"At Kleinstein and Oxenhorns'."

Kleinstein and Oxenhorns were the largest private bankers in Dresden, and made dealing in town-bonds and similar securities one of the specialities of their business. They were buying and selling them all day long. About the time mentioned by the Amtsrichter, and just as the clerks returned from dinner, a man

came up to the counter and offered for sale a number of municipal bonds—as afterwards transpired the very same that had just been stolen. The thief must have gone straight from Roth and Son's to Kleinstein and Oxenhorn's. There was nothing either in his manner or appearance to excite suspicion. So far from showing fuss or excitement, he was remarkably cool, wrangled about the price, counted his money with care, and detected a mistake in the statement which is always, in such circumstances, given to a seller. As for the man's appearance, the clerk who served him could say provokingly little. There were several customers waiting at the time; he was very busy, and there being nothing out of the way, either in the man's manner or his looks, he had taken hardly any notice of him. The clerk believed the man was dark, and could

swear that he wore spectacles; more than that he was unable to say.

Practically no description at all, for albeit fair men in Dresden probably outnumber the swart, there are, nevertheless, a few thousands of the latter; and a great minority, if not an actual majority of both, being shortsighted, the wearing of spectacles was not precisely a distinction. To look for a myopic man of dark complexion was about as promising a quest as trying to find a needle in a truss of hay.

"How did the fellow take his money?" asks Jack; "won't that afford a clue?"

The Amtsrichter shakes his head.

"The fellow knew what he was about. He took his money in gold and Reichsbank notes, which, being payable everywhere, may circulate for months before they are returned to headquarters. If he had

taken local notes, there would have been a chance of tracing them, perhaps. In my opinion, Herr Verelst, we have to do with a very clever gang of sharpers."

"A gang?"

"Yes, a gang. I have ascertained that a fellow was seen hanging about the door between two and three; no doubt on the look-out, and ready to warn his confederate of approaching danger."

"What was he like?"

"He wore spectacles!" says the magistrate, with a grimace; "as if all Germany did not wear spectacles. It seems to me, Herr Verelst, that some people have no eyes, since whether they are spectacled or not they see nothing. Why, I never pass a man in the street whose face and general appearance I could not minutely describe twenty-four hours afterwards."

"You forget that everybody is not a distinguished police magistrate, and a keen observer like you, Herr Amtsrichter," returns Verelst, gravely (though he was far from believing the great man's boast), "and I am sure if anybody can trace the villain, you can."

"We will do our best, Herr Verelst, —we will do our best; and albeit for the moment appearances may not seem very promising, I have a strong impression that we shall succeed in the end," answers the other, with a gratified smile. Though a "grave and reverend signior," he dearly loved a compliment.

"Well," says Jack, warmly, "I am not a rich man" (here the Herr Amstrichter, who believes that all Englishmen are rich, smiles incredulously)—"I am not a rich man, but I would willingly give two thousand marks to have the miscreants

caught who have so nearly killed poor Herr Roth, and twice as much to see them hanged."

"Yet you say you are not rich!"

To the Amtsrichter two thousand marks (200*l.*) seems an immense sum; it represents his official salary for a whole year.

"But we do not hang people in this country. We behead them."

"Well, to see them beheaded, then."

"I do not think there is any likelihood of the murderers in this case being beheaded, Herr Verelst. Capital sentences are seldom passed in Germany, and still more seldom carried out. The punishment of death is reserved for exceptionally atrocious crimes, and this, save as touching the clever way in which it has been perpetrated, and the so-far seeming absence of clues, presents no exceptional

features; certainly none of exceptional atrocity."

"What! Don't you think that to go into a man's house with a smiling face, and, while lulling him into confidence with fair words, slaughter him like an ox, is an atrocious crime?" exclaims Jack, indignantly. "I cannot imagine anything much worse. The man who kills another in a hot fit of passion, or out of jealousy or revenge, is almost innocent in comparison. Stealing to get bread is, perhaps, pardonable; but the wretch who robs and murders because he is too lazy to work deserves not to live."

"I daresay you are quite right, my dear sir; but the law in this country—or, at any rate, jurisprudence—only sanctions the penalty of death for such offences as parricide and attempts to murder exalted personages."

"So much the worse for the law, then—or jurisprudence—or whatever you like to call it," answers Verelst.

"Hush, my dear sir; you must not defame the law," says the Amtsrichter, whom this sentiment seems greatly to shock.

"Oh, that is an offence, is it?"

"Decidedly, and it is punishable by a specific penalty."

"It is a bad law, all the same," returns Jack, doggedly. "However, let us say no more about it. The thing is to lag the scoundrels, and if they cannot be hanged, penal servitude will, perhaps, do almost as well. For my own part, I think I would rather have the hanging. It might be more painful, perhaps, but it would be a good deal sooner over."

"I trust, Herr Verelst," says the Amtsrichter, severely, "that it will never

be your lot, nor that of any of your friends, to undergo either of these punishments."

"I do not think any of my friends are more likely to be hanged than any of yours," replies Jack, nettled by the magistrate's rather personal remark; and he would probably have said something more if the conversation had not been interrupted by the arrival of the ambulance.

Thanks to the measures taken by the doctors, the descent into the street was accomplished without accident or serious disturbance of the patient, who remained all the time in the same somnolent condition, except by his breathing, giving no sign of life.

After so terrible an occurrence as that which had just come to pass, it was out of the question to think of resuming business, so by Verelst's advice Anspach closed the bank for the day, and two

gendarmes remained at the door nearly all night to protect the premises from the surging crowd, which seemed almost madly eager to view the scene of the crime.

At half-past six Jack had to face another trial—meeting Helenchen. But it was less painful than it might have been, for, thinking it would be no real kindness to keep back the truth, he had already told her the worst. "Your father," he telegraphed, "has met with a serious accident, and though he may live some time, the doctors give little hope of his ultimate recovery. Come by the first train, and I will meet you at the Leipziger Station."

Verelst was startled by the change in the girl's appearance. Her usually rosy cheeks were blanched, her eyes red with weeping; yet she greeted him with a grateful smile, and not until they were seated in the droshky—singularly enough

the same in which, four days before, he had ridden to the same station with Doctor Roydon and Leah—did she ask any questions. Then, with tremulous lips, and in a scarcely audible voice, for the girl was of a loving nature and deeply attached to her father, she bade him tell her "how it had happened." Jack had already apprised her that her father was still alive. So he told the sad tale again, and as Helenchen looked up to him with her tender blue eyes, his heart filled with pity, and his wrath against the wretches who had wrought all this trouble grew hotter than ever. Words failed him to say what he would have liked, but she read his sympathy in his face, and thanked him with a pressure of her soft little hand and a look eloquent of gratitude.

When the droshky pulled up before the garden gate Helenchen almost fainted, and

Jack had to support her into the house. She feared that her father might be dead, but he still lived; and, after ascertaining that he could be of no further use, and saying he would call early in the morning, Verelst returned to the droshky, and told the driver to take him to Rampische Gasse, where dwelt the Ashleys, for not amid all the excitement of the day had he forgotten Leah Starkova.

CHAPTER IV.

"SUCH A GETTING UPSTAIRS."

THE Ashleys inhabited an apartment *vier Treppen hoch*—four flights high; and, the flights being wide, the situation was airy and elevated, commanding an extensive view of the street below, and the chimney tops on the opposite side of the way. It also afforded the inmates admirable facilities for exercising their legs and testing their wind; but when, as occasionally happened, one of them, on reaching the street, found that he had forgotten some indispensable article, such as a purse or pocket-handkerchief, the result was not always edifying: in the case of the Reverend Mr. Ashley, it was a look of woe and a groan of

despair; in that of the fat German gentleman, who lived next door, an explosion of *Donners*, *Blitzens*, and so forth, that might be heard half a mile off.

Among other advantages incidental to this sort of high life was a comparative immunity from the visits of beggars and other unwelcome guests, for a man who mounts four flights of stairs on the chance of getting a crust of bread must be hungry indeed; and, in the opinion of Mrs. Ashley (who had reduced thrift to a science), the disadvantages were fully atoned for by the lowness of the rent, the topmost story of a house being always the cheapest.

John Verelst, who had never been to the parson's before, ran up the first flight with all the energy of a young man sound in wind, limb, and eyesight, and ignorant of what was before him; but long before he reached the top of the fourth he was

glad to moderate his pace, and take no more than one step at a time, like his elders.

He found Mrs. Ashley and Leah together; the former darning one of her husband's stockings, the latter reading aloud for their common benefit from a rather ancient copy of the *Times*, which, when too old to be of much use, was placed at the chaplain's disposal by an obliging member of his congregation.

Verelst did not receive the warmest possible welcome from the parson's wife, but, as he had expected nothing better, he was not disappointed. The truth was, that since his arrival in Dresden his attendance at her husband's church had not been very regular; he had even gone once or twice to the other English church, and she liked neither the other church nor the other parson. She feared,

too, that he had come to supper, and her provision for that evening was somewhat scanty.

But Leah received him with evident pleasure, and even inquired why he had not come sooner.

"I do not think I should be here now if it had not been for what has happened to-day," he answered. "You do not seem to have heard—"

"Heard what?" interrupted Mrs. Ashley.

"That the bank has been robbed, and Herr Roth nearly killed!"

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed Mrs. Ashley, turning pale, and falling back in her chair; "and there was a burglary in the next street only last week. I declare if this goes on I shall neither be able to sleep on my bed nor dare to go out. How was it, Mr. Verelst? Tell us all about it, please."

So the story was told again, and then both the ladies fell to questioning Jack at great length, Leah showing the most concern, Mrs. Ashley the most curiosity.

"I am very sorry," said the former. "Herr Roth is so thoroughly good and kind. And Dr. Roydon will be very sorry; he is under great obligations to Herr Roth. What a terrible calamity for the family! Poor Frau Roth! And the girls; poor things, they will be almost broken-hearted! Robbery was the sole motive of the crime, you think?"

"Clearly. The bonds were taken, and directly afterwards sold."

"But is it not conceivable that there was some other motive—revenge, for instance—and that these bonds were taken to throw the police off the scent?"

"Who could want to be revenged on

the old man? I never heard of his having an enemy."

"People don't always know who are their enemies," returned Leah, moodily; "a man may smile and smile, and be a villain, you know."

"The matter never occurred to me in that light before," said Jack, thoughtfully, "and it may be so. But no, the motive must have been robbery, otherwise the thieves would not have been in such a hurry to melt the bonds and—"

"What do you say the man that cashed them was like?" broke in Leah, with sudden eagerness and heightened colour.

"All that we know is that he was dark and wore spectacles; and that does not amount to much."

"Dark! Ah, then, I am wrong; of course I am wrong."

"Wrong about what, Miss Roydon?"

"An idea I had."

"What was it?"

"I cannot tell you. It is too absurd, too monstrous, too altogether ridiculous and impossible," said Leah, rapidly and excitedly. "I am ashamed of having thought of such a thing. No, I cannot tell you, Mr. Verelst. It is impossible."

"That is as you like, Miss Roydon," returned Jack, quietly, though he would have given a good deal to know what was in her mind. She evidently suspected somebody, but whom? The more he thought, the more he was puzzled. He was not aware that Herr Roth had ever been at enmity with anybody. All the same, he might have been. Jack resolved that he would make a point of speaking to Anspach on the subject, and, as soon as opportunity served, to Frau Roth.

"Have you heard from your father yet?" he asked, after a short pause.

"Not yet. He does not often write to me when he is on a journey. But I should be glad if you would write and tell him what has happened. He will be very much concerned. His address is, 'Hotel des Ambassadeurs, Rue de Lille.'"

"Certainly. I will write to him to-morrow," (making a memorandum of the address). "Do you think he will carry out his intention of crossing the Channel?"

"I have no idea. His movements are always so very erratic—. Ah! here is Mr. Ashley."

And as she speaks the parson bursts into the room in a state of great excitement, but so blown with the run upstairs that all he can get out is—he had not breath enough for the aspirate—"Poor—

Err Roth—mur—der—ed!" Then seeing Jack, and regaining his wind, he asks for a true and particular account of the robbery, of which he had heard only an incomplete and grossly exaggerated version.

"I am very sorry," he says, when Verelst had answered all his questions. "Poor Herr Roth! I do not keep my account with him, and I did not know him very well, but I believe he is a very worthy man," by which Mr. Ashley probably did not mean, though it might seem so, that if he had known Herr Roth better, and done business with him, the banker's worth would have stood on a firmer basis.

"It is simply awful," groaned Mrs. Ashley, who really seemed very much affected. "I don't know what the world is coming to. Where shall we go to-night, Jerry?"

It was almost as startling to hear the reverend gentleman addressed as "Jerry" as it would have been to hear him called "Toby" or "Tosspot." Jack did not know that the chaplain's Christian name was Jeroboam, and that his wife only used it on special occasions, when it invariably acted like a charm.

"Where shall we go to-night, my dear? To bed, of course."

"You may, but I do not think I dare. I shall sit up here in the drawing-room, keep a light burning, and read my Bible."

"As you like, my dear; but I shall go to bed, and trust in Providence."

"Did you" (suddenly, as if struck by a bright idea)—"did you see any suspicious characters about the street door as you came in?"

"No, I think not. Suspicious characters! Certainly not," returned the

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parson, but rather hesitatingly, as if he could not quite make up his mind whether he had or not.

"You did not notice, Jerry? Now, tell the truth. You did not notice?" said the lady, severely.

"Well, if you put it in that way, not very particularly. But who would expect to see suspicious characters in so respectable a street as Rampische Gasse?"

"Who would expect murder and robbery to be committed in so respectable a street as Streu Gasse! The more respectable the street, the greater the danger, in my opinion. Will you oblige me, my dear, by going down and seeing if there are any suspicious characters about?"

"What, down all those steps and up again!" exclaimed the parson, with a look of dismay. "I have been up and down four times to-day, already."

"What is that for a man?" returned Mrs. Ashley, scornfully. "If I were a man I would go up and down forty times, and think nothing about it."

"If you were a man! I only wish—I assure you, my dear, that the suspicious characters exist only in your imagination. Besides, how can I identify them?"

"By using your eyes. Do go now, and be quick, for I shall not know a moment's peace until you come back."

Still the chaplain did not move. He did not even answer, but taking up the *Times*, which Leah had laid down, he settled himself in his chair, as if for a good read.

His wife eyed him sharply, and then discharged her last bolt,—

"Jeroboam, my dear," she said, slowly, and in a sepulchral voice—"Jeroboam, *will* you oblige me?"

With a sigh that was almost a groan the

parson put his paper aside, and, rising from his chair, rushed out of the room. He hated his name, and, uttered in that way, it was more than he could stand.

Mrs. Ashley looked quite triumphant, but a few minutes later, *apropos* to nothing in particular, she turned pale, and gave a wild shriek.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "if one of those wretches should molest him! He is not strong, and I do believe he has not taken a stick. Would you—oh! would you—Mr. Verelst, follow my husband, and see that no harm befalls him? If you have not a stick, you will find a very thick one in the corridor."

"Shall I bring him back?" asked Jack, who, although he had abundant reasons for being serious, could hardly help laughing.

"By all means. I shall not have a

moment's peace until I know he is safe. Oh, why did I let him go?"

So Jack, armed with the thick stick, which Mrs. Ashley insisted on his taking, goes downstairs, but when he gets to the bottom sees no chaplain, greatly to his surprise—no sign of him about the door—and neither up the street nor down the street is a glimpse of the ghostly man to be seen. Is it possible that one of Mrs. Ashley's suspicious characters has spirited her husband away? At any rate, it will never do to go back without him. There is nothing for it but to wait until he turns up; and by way of passing the time Verelst walks a few yards up the street, looking meanwhile sharply about him.

As he goes past a restaurant, hard by, the door opens, and Jack, chancing to look inside, catches a glimpse of a figure he seems to know. Yes, there is no

mistake about it. That lanky man with a white choker and mutton-chop whiskers, in the act of lifting a big glass of beer to his lips, is none other than the chaplain. Jack slips softly into the restaurant, and, touching him lightly on the shoulder, says, in a rather deeper voice than he need have done, "How about those suspicious characters?"

"God bless me!" exclaims the parson, dropping his glass as if it were red hot, and whizzing round like a teetotum—"Oh, it is you, Mr. Verelst! I thought it was my wife."

"She has sent me to fetch you!" says Jack.

"Why, what's in the wind now?"

"She is afraid that those suspicious characters may be doing you a mischief—that you may catch a Tartar, in fact."

"As if I had not caught one. Hang her suspicious characters!"

"I don't think Mrs. Ashley would have any objections," says Jack, with a smile.

"I quite agree with you, and the hangman would have a good time of it, for of all merciless creatures commend me to a woman. Well, I will go with you. But first of all I must have another glass of beer to replace that you made me lose. I do not think I was ever more startled in my life. And you will have a glass, too, won't you? I always do before mounting to our mansion in the skies. If I did not I should never survive the journey."

The beer drunk, they addressed themselves to the task so much dreaded by the chaplain.

"This is such a getting upstairs, and

no mistake," he groaned, when they were some half way up. "I cannot add, though, 'as I never did see.' I have seen it only too often; I told her how it would be, and I think she sees her error, only she is too proud to admit it. But there is one great advantage in living on the heights. A man can be quiet, and he is troubled with no visits of mere politeness; none but those who really care for us—and the tax-gatherer—ever get as far as our door."

When Mrs. Ashley saw her husband safe and sound she showed as much emotion, and embraced him with as much fervour, as if he had just returned from the wars; but the chaplain turned his cheek to the kisser—he was afraid she might smell the beer.

Jack's reward for his complaisance was a profusion of thanks and an invitation to

supper (notwithstanding the bareness of the larder), which, as he had not eaten anything since noon, and for other reasons, he accepted without hesitation; but when Mrs. Ashley saw the hole he made in the remains of her shoulder of mutton, and the *Brödchens* (little loaves) he consumed, and the way he laid the butter on, her heart sank within her, and she repented her of her too impulsive hospitality.

CHAPTER V.

DR. ROYDON RETURNS.

When John Verelst went to the bank on the following morning, Streu Gasse was still thronged with curious onlookers, for the crowd, though always melting, was continually being renewed. A man would join the group for a few minutes, ask a question, or make an observation, and pass on; and the next moment his place would be taken by another. But a German crowd is not like an English mob; every male adult composing it has undergone military training, and retains the instincts of discipline. They indulge neither in horse-play nor coarse joking; the law is held in respect,

and its agents are obeyed almost as promptly as the rank and file of an army obey their officers.

A few years ago there was trouble in a South German town, owing to a rise in the price of beer. The people, touched in their tenderest point, assembled in the streets by thousands, and threatened vengeance against the brewers. When the agitation had reached its height, and a serious riot seemed imminent, the general in command of the troops, a veteran of the French war, walked in full uniform, accompanied by a single aide-de-camp, slowly across the market place. He said not a word to anybody, but the hint was taken; a few minutes later the crowd had dispersed, and the brewers breathed in peace.

In the bank itself there was another crowd, no less curious if less numerous than that in the street. Everybody who

could find a pretext for calling did so, and everybody who called wanted to know all about the robbery. All day long people were coming and going, and when closing time arrived, Jack and Anspach were almost wearied to death with answering questions and receiving customers. They had heard that the old man still lived, but it was only when evening came that Verelst found time to go to Schiller Strasse, and make his own inquiries.

Poor Frau Roth, worn out with agitation and a sleepless night, was lying down. Helenchen and Mathilde were in the sick room, and there Jack joined them. Herr Roth was still in the same unconscious state; he gave no sign of life; and Helenchen, whose eyes were red with weeping, whispered to Jack that she did not think her poor father had long to live. The doctors said he might go any

moment. Her mother alone clung to hope, and refused to believe that her husband's days were numbered.

When two or three days passed without any change for the worst, if none for the better, all the family, and several of the old man's friends, began to share in this hope. Many a one doomed by the doctors, they said, had recovered—why not Herr Roth? At any rate he lived, and while there was life there was hope. Among those who took this view was Anspach. He was as sanguine as Frau Roth.

"The old man will get better, Herr Verelst," he said. "I have known many a man worse hurt than he pull through. He has a strong constitution; he will not die of a broken head."

But Jack, despite his sympathy with the family, his respect for Herr Roth, and his strong desire for his recovery, was unable

to participate in this hope. From the first he had looked upon him as being virtually dead, and so he looked on him still. He had seen him weltering in his blood, had watched by his bedside, and now, as well as then, Herr Roth was, to all seeming, more dead than alive; and as the poor old man lay there with white upturned face, fallen cheeks, slightless eyes, and bandaged head, it required an effort to realize that he was a breathing man, and not a corpse laid out for burial.

All the same, the doctors were puzzled. Neither of them thought that the patient could recover (although even on that point they expressed themselves with less confidence than they had done at the outset), yet they were disposed to modify their original opinion, that he would never speak again. The idea now was that he might, after all, recover consciousness;

but that the recovery would be followed at a short interval, by death. It would be, as it were, the last flickering of the lamp of life. When this was likely to come to pass nobody ventured to say. It might be to-morrow; it might not be for weeks—months even.

Frau Roth, like the loving wife she was, took the more sanguine view. She believed that her husband would get better; and the belief, besides giving her courage, restored much of her wonted serenity of temper. When Jack called she could not only discuss with him the chances of Herr Roth's recovery, but enter into business details, as to which it was necessary to consult her. She had asked Verelst, in whom she showed great trust, to see, as far as possible, that all went well, and, as Anspach possessed the chief's procuration, the bank had, so far, suffered little by his absence.

Nobody took greater interest in Herr Roth's case, or seemed more desirous of his restoration to consciousness, than the Herr Amtsrichter, for as yet he had not succeeded in finding the slightest clue, and he began reluctantly to admit that, unless the half-killed banker should so far recover as to be able to throw some light on the matter, there was very little chance of the culprits being identified. The police were entirely at fault; all they had done, or, indeed, could do, was to make ingenious deductions from imaginary facts.

When Jack suggested that the outrage might possibly be the work of some enemy, the Amtsrichter answered that if he felt more certain of one thing than another it was that the robbery had been committed by professional thieves who were passed masters in their business.

It was too well planned and cleverly executed, he said, to be the work of amateurs. Moreover, the revenge theory was scouted both by Frau Roth and Anspach. Herr Roth, they felt sure, had never made an enemy in all his life.

Then Jack, whose mind Leah's mysterious allusion had greatly exercised, hinted to the Amtsrichter an idea he had lately conceived—though he could not deny that it was very far-fetched—that the mysterious individual who called himself Von Ehrenberg might possibly have had a hand in the affair.

The examining judge laughed outright, rather to the annoyance of Verelst, who did not see anything to laugh at. "No, my friend," he said, "it is not Herr von Ehrenberg. Do you know who Von Ehrenberg is?"

"I suppose Von Ehrenberg; if not, who is he?"

"You will perhaps know sometime."

More than this the magistrate refused to say.

Jack wrote to Dr. Roydon, as Leah had suggested, and in the course of four or five days received an answer, dated from Paris. The Doctor said how shocked he had been to hear of the terrible outrage on his esteemed friend, Herr Roth, and the robbery of the bank, and he requested Jack to convey to Frau Roth and the family the assurance of his sincerest sympathy. Instead of going on to Manchester, as he had intended, he should only run over to London for a day and return by Harwich and Rotterdam, and he hoped to be in Dresden in the course of the following week. He might add, for Mr. Verelst's information, that he had sold his bric-à-brac, and

all but completed the business which was the object of his journey.

"That means he is going to pay the bill, I suppose?" said Verelst to Anspach, to whom he read this part of the letter.

"I suppose it does. How has he raised the wind, I wonder?"

"I am sure I cannot tell you. But so long as he pays, that is no affair of ours, and I think he will pay."

The result justified Jack's confidence. Some eight or nine days later the Doctor walked into the bank and handed Anspach the amount of the bill in Bank of France notes, whereupon the cashier, with a great show of deference and respect, receipted and returned him the acceptance which had been the cause of so much anxiety and strife.

"I am glad it is off my mind and out of your hands," he said, putting the document

carefully into his pocket-book. "Poor Herr Roth! I wish he could know that I have kept my word."

But there was no sign of exultation in his manner, which, though as friendly as always, was unusually quiet and subdued, as if he felt the calamity that had befallen the head of the firm. His face was worn, too, and he looked none the better for his journey—probably, because, as he explained to Anspach and Verelst, the crossing had been bad and he very sea-sick. He asked a great many questions about the robbery and Herr Roth's condition; and the next day, as Jack afterwards heard, he called at the banker's house.

CHAPTER VI.

A STARTLING SUGGESTION.

THE visit rather surprised Frau Roth, and she received Dr. Roydon somewhat coldly, for, though her husband had liked and befriended him, she had never cared much for the man. But when he took her hand, and in his grave and earnest manner expressed his sympathy for her and her family in their misfortune, and spoke so nicely of the kindness he had always received from Herr Roth, she began to relent, and when he expressed the hope and belief that her husband would eventually get better, her heart was completely won. As a drowning man clutches at a straw, so

she was ready to believe in anybody—above all in a medical man—who believed in the possibility of her husband's recovery.

"Oh, how glad and thankful I am to hear you say so!" she exclaimed. "I feel sure of it; I have said so all along. But you are the first doctor who has given me the least bit of comfort. Dr. Siebold and Dr. Krankenheiler are very reserved, and give so little hope. But come and see Heinrich yourself, and then tell me what you think."

"Certainly, if you wish it, Frau Roth. But as a friend—strictly as a friend; and not in any professional capacity."

"That is what I mean, of course. But you can give me your opinion all the same—strictly as a friend, you know."

"Certainly," repeated Dr. Roydon, as he followed his hostess into the sick man's room.

"Well," she asked, anxiously, when they were once more in the drawing-room, "what is your verdict?"

Before giving a reply the Doctor waited a full minute, as if he were revolving the case in his mind—a minute of dire suspense to Frau Roth.

"I will give you my honest opinion, but I must tell you frankly that, as likely as not, it may be a wrong opinion; not only because, like any other medical man, I am fallible, but because I have had no opportunity of examining my poor friend's wounds. My opinion is based on what you and the nurse have told me, and my own observation of the patient's present condition. With these qualifications, I think—"

"Yes, Doctor."

"I think there is every likelihood of your husband's recovery."

"Thank Heaven for that! Oh! Dr. Roydon, you do not know what a weight you have lifted from my mind!" and the poor woman, overpowered by her feelings, sank into a chair, and covered her face with her hands.

"There is a fair chance of his recovery, provided—"

"Provided what, Doctor? Say what must be done, and everything that love or money can do shall be done!"

"Provided that he is trephined."

"Trephined! trephined! What is that?"

"I am going to tell you. In my opinion, your husband's condition—his unconsciousness, I mean—is caused by a depression of the parietal bone, and its consequent encroachment on the cavity of the skull, thereby producing compression of the brain. Trephining is an operation

for raising the depressed fragment. It is done by a small and extremely fine circular saw, mounted on a centre-pin—"

Frau Roth's face paled with horror.

"A circular saw? Oh, my poor Heinrich!"

"It is not at all a dreadful-looking instrument, as you might suppose from my description," said Dr. Roydon, soothingly. His manner was quiet and collected, but he was little less pale than Frau Roth herself. "It would, however, be wrong to conceal from you that the operation is extremely delicate—somewhat dangerous even. But I am sure of this, that in trephining lies the only chance of saving your husband's life. I have known it save life in several similar instances. At the battle of Chattanooga, General Burraclough had his skull fractured by the splinter of a shell, and he was unconscious—just as your

husband is now—for nearly three months. We trephined him, and, except that he wears a little silver plate on his head, he is now as sound a man as ever. Has neither Dr. Siebold nor Dr. Krankenheiler suggested any such operation?"

"Not to me."

"I am surprised at that. But, then, German surgeons, clever as they are in theory, are often timid operators. They shrink from bold remedies."

"And you really think this—this trephining—would save my husband's life?"

"I do think so, Frau Roth."

"Would you undertake the operation, Dr. Roydon?"

"My dear madam, that is impossible. The case is in the hands of the best surgeons in Dresden, and, even if I were in practice, it would be the height of presumption on my part to interfere with them. But I

will tell you what I shall be happy to do. If you will ask them to allow me, I will be present, as a friend of the family, the next time the bandages are removed, and I daresay I may find an opportunity of suggesting the use of the trephine, and, with your support, induce them to undertake the operation."

"Oh, you may depend on my support, Dr. Roydon. Anything to save my poor Heinrich's life. It shall be as you say. Dr. Siebold will be here to-night, and I will let you know what time to come to-morrow, for it is then his wounds are to be dressed. And I thank you so much for your kindness—so much. If this operation is performed, and my husband should live, you will have made me and my children your debtors for life. There is nothing we could refuse you!"

CHAPTER VII.

"WHEN DOCTORS DISAGREE?"

THE German surgeons offered no objection to Frau Roth's deferentially worded proposal that Dr. Roydon should be present, as a friend of the family, at their next consultation. Whether sincerely or not may possibly be open to question; but Dr. Siebold very politely said that he and his Herr Colleague should be delighted to have the benefit of their English Herr Colleague's experience and advice. So at the appointed time Dr. Roydon appeared at Schiller Strasse, when poor Herr Roth's wounds were carefully examined and dressed, and his case made the subject of

a long discussion, conducted in highly technical phraseology, chiefly by Siebold and Krankenheiler; the English doctor, modestly in the background, making only an occasional remark, but listening attentively and observing carefully. The leading part was taken by Dr. Krankenheiler, who was the senior of the other two, and in popular estimation the first of Dresden surgeons, albeit his younger brethren were beginning to consider him rather slow and old-fashioned.

"Did you ever see such a case before, Herr Doctor?" he asked, after they had concluded their examination.

"Not precisely, Herr Krankenheiler," returned Roydon, quietly, and with a slight tremble in his voice, for the sight of his poor friend's wound seemed to have agitated him somewhat. "Not precisely; I mean that I never saw a skull fractured

as this is fractured, and by the hands of a—"

"Murderer," put in Siebold.

"No, I don't think I should say that, for so long as Herr Roth lives his assailant cannot properly be called a murderer."

"The distinction is over nice, dear Herr Colleague. Whatever may be the fate of our patient, the man who struck him down is a murderer in intention if not in fact."

"Perhaps not. How do you know that he intended—"

"But that is not to the purpose. We are considering the case before us—not a question of medical jurisprudence—and I was about to observe that, though I never saw a skull fractured as this is fractured, and by the same means, I have seen many similar cases. I had charge of a field hospital in the American Civil War, and you know what that means."

"You have had a large experience, Herr Colleague," said Dr. Krankenheiler, a tall, spare man, with a large nose, and a huge wart at the end of it, hollow cheeks, a yellow skin, dim eyes, and grey hair. "You have had a large experience, and we shall be glad to have the advantage of your opinion. You doubtless agree with us—that a cure is past hoping for."

"That depends on the meaning you attach to the word, Herr Doctor. To restore our poor friend to his wonted health, to make him the man he was before—before this happened is, of course out of the question. All the same, I think he may be restored to the full possession of his faculties and live many years."

"You would advise an operation, then?" interposed Siebold, briskly.

"Yes. If the case were mine I should use the trephine."

"I cannot agree with you, Herr Colleague," said Krankenheiler, almost angrily. "The cure would be worse than the malady. I have used the trephine three times, and every time with fatal results. It is kill or cure, with ten chances to one in favour of killing. If you were to trephine, it is my opinion that you would kill the patient."

"I am sorry to differ from you, Herr Doctor," returned Roydon, calmly; "but you asked for my opinion, and I am bound to give it faithfully. My experience has been less unfortunate than yours. I have used the trephine in a score of cases, only five or six of which ended fatally, and in this case I do not think the result would be fatal."

"Well, all that I can say," answered Krankenheiler, warmly—he was not used to having his opinions contested—"all

that I can say is, that so long as I have anything to do with this case, there shall be no operation. Trephining is justifiable only in the last extremity—as a desperate expedient—which may possibly save a patient from otherwise certain death. Herr Roth is not in this condition; he still lives."

"True, but for all pratical purposes he might as well be dead. He is like a man in a state of chronic catalepsy, and one of these days he will die."

"I am not so sure of that. He is a man of immense vitality, and he may recover, after all; though I admit I did not once think so. At any rate, I cannot advise an operation."

"But suppose the family desired it?"

"I suppose the family would have their way. But even then I could not accept

the responsibility. Rather would I withdraw from the case altogether."

This deliverance closed the discussion, as it was doubtless meant to do, and the senior doctor led the way out of the room.

"I am quite of your opinion," whispered Siebold in Roydon's ear; "but as Krankenheiler has a great name, and I am so much his junior, you can easily understand how difficult it is to oppose him."

Dr. Roydon nodded. He understood perfectly.

In the hall they were confronted by Frau Roth. She looked pale and agitated. If her own life had depended on the issue of the consultation her suspense could not have been more agonizing.

"How do you find him to-day, gentlemen?" she said, as she showed the doctors into the drawing-room.

"Very much the same, gracious lady," answered Krankenheiler, taking the largest easy-chair, and raising his arms and joining the tips of his forefingers as if he were going to say his prayers; "very much the same, but I think I can discern a slight, a very slight improvement since yesterday."

"Oh!" exclaimed the poor wife, with a sigh of relief; "you think he will get better, then, after all?"

"I am afraid I cannot say that yet, gracious lady. But time is in our favour, and we are not without hope."

"Thank Heaven for that. But can nothing be done to make my husband speak, that he may tell us—tell us—"

"How this terrible business happened, you would say. I fear not. I do not see how anything can be done. Still (loftily) this is only my opinion; and your friend,

Dr. Roydon, here, thinks that we ought to use the trephine."

"The trephine?"

Frau Roth had by no means forgotten Roydon's explanation, but, for fear of compromising him and offending the others, she thought it best to feign ignorance.

Krankenheiler, unbending, explains in popular language the nature of the operation in question, dwelling much on its danger, and adding that, in the case of Herr Roth, it would, in his opinion, be attended with fatal results.

Frau Roth seemed much distressed.

"You think nothing can be done, then, Herr Doctor?" she said.

"Nothing more than is being done, gracious lady. We must have patience and put our trust in nature. She sometimes works marvels."

"And in Heaven," added Frau Roth, fervently.

"As you like, gracious lady," said Krankenheiler, rising from his chair. Like most German doctors, he had very little faith in anything which he could not see, or had not developed from his inner consciousness.

"Must you go?" she asked.

"We must, indeed. Dr. Siebold and I have to be at the hospital in half an hour."

"But you need not hurry away, Dr. Roydon. You will stay and take a cup of tea with me and Helenchen."

"Thank you," said Roydon, resuming his seat. "My engagements are not quite so pressing as those of my colleagues, and a cup of tea is always refreshing."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MARK OF CAIN.

"I SUPPOSE our English colleague will try and persuade Frau Roth that her husband may be safely trephined," observed Krankenheiler, as he and Siebold settled themselves in the droshky which had been waiting at the door.

"That is very likely, I think," returned the other. "He seems to have a shrewd knowledge of surgery. That remark of his about the function of the optic thalamus struck me as being rather original."

"Yes, it was rather sharp. Oh, the man has ability, no doubt; but does he want to kill poor Herr Roth that he proposes to trephine him?"

"You really think it would kill him, Herr Colleague?"

"I do, indeed, or I should not have said so. What business has the man to poke his nose into our case—a man who has retired from the profession, too? I don't like these English, Siebold; nor Americans either—they are all alike; do you?"

"Judging from the specimens I have met here, not very much. But I have not seen them at home. It might make a difference if I had."

"I do not think it would. I have been in England, and the more I see of them, the less I like them. Scratch a Russian, they say, and you find a Tartar. See an Englishman drunk—no very difficult matter—and you know him for what he is—a low-born ruffian, who swears like a fiend, pulls off his coat, and wants to fight you."

"But the educated classes surely don't do that, Herr Krankenheiler? You are speaking of the lower orders?"

"Well, are not the lower orders the majority of the nation? And the upper classes, with their lack of idealism, their deficient sense of art, their Philistinism, and their egotism, are to me utterly antipathetic. When an Englishmen writes a letter he is a big 'I'—his correspondent a small 'you.' With us it is the reverse. And how characteristically egotistic and insolent is their national hymn, 'Rule Britannia.' Still, it is not quite devoid of dignity, like the American 'Yankee Doodle,' which is simply a nigger melody of the baser sort. They have no souls for music, these Anglo-Saxons, and there is hardly a score of good songs in the English language, except such as have been written by Scotlanders and Irelanders. Compare them

with our German folk-songs, and you will see how poor they are. You remember the lines,—

> "'Wo man singt, da lass dich ruhig nieder,
> Böse Menchen haben keine Lieder.'
> (Where men sing there may you rest serene,
> The evil-minded have no songs, I ween.)

If the poet be right, and I think he is, England and America are about the last places in the world a cultured German should choose to live in."

"In that case a good many of our countrymen have chosen very badly," said Siebold, gravely, but with a half sarcastic smile, which, perhaps fortunately, escaped the notice of his irate and short-sighted companion. "Yet I daresay you are right. My knowledge of the English and Americans is derived from observation of the specimens I have met here, and as most of

them don't speak German, and I cannot speak English, I am unable to generalize with the same accuracy as you, Herr Colleague, who have had so ample opportunities of studying the people at their own firesides."

"That is true. Ten years ago I spent three weeks in the house of my cousin, Fritz Ganzspech, who is a professor of music in London, and I gave nearly the whole of my time to observation of the English character."

"So you know them thoroughly?"

"I think I may say I do, Herr Colleague," returned the senior, complacently; "and the conclusions I have formed by induction are confirmed by the testimony of my inner consciousness. As for the Americans, as they so arrogantly and unwarrantably call themselves, I think they are even less cultured and more altogether disagreeable

than their English kinsfolk. One of them, an obscure writer of the name of Pa yn—no, not Payn—Mayne ; no, not Mayne—Twain ; yes, that is it, Twain—has actually dared to hold up our beloved, our revered mother-tongue, to ridicule. But I know these Americans not from their books only. I met several at Ganzspech's house, where he often gives musical evenings, and receives much high-born company. There came one evening two young women from the United States. They were travelling quite alone—imagine that, Herr Colleague—quite alone! The younger was not more than eighteen, and very pretty ; she had a face like a piece of Meissen porcelain painted by Creuz, but as impudent she was as a French grenadier ; she talked to me with as much assurance as if I had—"

"Not been Herr Hofrath Dr. Krankenheiler," suggested Siebold.

"Precisely. She did really, I assure you. I shall not soon forget that young woman." (Here the Herr Doctor frowned as if he were recalling something very unpleasant.) "You will hardly believe it, Herr Colleague, but I am disposed to think she tried to make fun of me."

"Of you? Impossible!"

"Your incredulity is natural, but let me tell you the facts. I was asking the maiden some questions—for, as every physician should, I am always trying to increase my knowledge—about her country, and among other things I inquired if the descendants of the convicts who were transported to the North American colonies by the English Government were still a marked class, and excluded from the society of the religious and the rich. She answered that they were; and when I suggested that, after such a lapse of time, it must surely be diffi-

cult to distinguish them, she said, 'Not at all; they bear the mark of Cain.'

"'The mark of Cain!' I said; 'what is that?'

"'They have all a wart at the end of their noses,' she said—'an hereditary peculiarity which we call the mark of Cain;' and then she asked me if all Germans were as yellow-skinned and short-sighted as I was! Oh, most shameless and irreverent are American maidens. Think you not so, Herr Colleague?"

But Herr Siebold was prevented from replying by a violent fit of sneezing, which rendered necessary an application of his handkerchief to both his eyes and nose, and he had hardly recovered from the paroxysm when the droshky driver pulled up at the hospital gate.

"You will see Roth again to-morrow, I

presume?" observed the councillor, as they alighted from the vehicle.

"Certainly," said the junior.

"Well, if the subject of trephining should be once more broached, remember that I will be no party to such an enormity. If the Englishman wants to kill Herr Roth, he must do it alone. I shall decline to commit murder, even to oblige the patient's family."

CHAPTER IX.

DR. ROYDON CONSENTS.

"Oh, this is dreadful! Herr Dr. Krankenheiler will not consent to an operation," exclaimed Frau Roth, so soon as the two doctors were out of the house. "And I had built so much on it—I had built so much on it! My poor husband! If I could hear his voice once more; if he could tell us how this dreadful thing happened, so that we might find out and punish the monster who has killed him and broken my heart, I think I could almost be content."

Balder Roydon sat opposite to her, the fading sunlight playing on his white hair,

and showing dark shadows under his troubled eyes.

"What do you think, Dr. Roydon? Will he ever speak again?" she continued, after pausing for a reply, which did not come.

"Not unless he is trephined," said Roydon, in a low voice.

"But Dr. Krankenheiler is opposed to it, and I cannot set my opinion against his."

"He may perhaps be persuaded to alter his opinion."

"I am afraid not. He thinks nobody knows as well as himself. See how he lords it over Dr. Siebold, and I am sure Siebold is the cleverer of the two."

"So am I, and I am sure of another thing, that whatever Krankenheiler may have been once, he is an old woman now. As for Siebold, you are quite right; he

knows his business, only he lets Krankenheiler sit on him. Siebold is quite of my opinion about the trephining."

"So am I, Dr. Roydon; and I am so anxious to hear Heinrich speak, if it were only once—. But Dr. Krankenheiler is against it, and it would be impossible to dismiss him, you know."

"Why?"

"He is such a great man. He has been made a court councillor, and they say the king is going to make him a VON! I should never have the courage."

"I don't think you need dismiss him, Frau Roth. All you have to do is to say that you desire to have your husband trephined, and then he will either accede to your request or withdraw from the case altogether."

"And if he should prove right, after all, and my husband should die, what would

become of me? What would the children say? What would our friends say? What would Dr. Krankenheiler say? You are very kind and good, Dr. Roydon, but I dare not accept the responsibility—I dare not, I dare not!" cried Frau Roth, almost beside herself with hesitation and indecision.

"Suppose you were to consult your children?" suggested Roydon.

"Yes, I will, I will; and one or two of our best friends. I wonder what Anspach thinks; he is a man of experience, and much attached to my husband. I will consult him, and also Mr Verelst—he is a sensible young man, and if they agree—if, we make up our minds, and Dr. Krankenheiler refuses, as I am sure he will—would you, Dr. Roydon, undertake the operation? You have had so much experience, and seem so sure that it will do

good; you were my poor husband's friend, too, and I feel as if I should have more confidence in you than in anybody else. Would you do this great kindness for us, dear Dr. Roydon, if we decide to follow your advice?"

Roydon shifted his chair, and held his hands before his eyes, as if to shade them from the sunlight.

"You forget Dr. Siebold," he said, in a scarcely audible voice. He seemed agitated, and Frau Roth liked him all the better for this display of emotion, natural enough in the circumstances.

"How I have wronged this man!" she thought. "He is almost as much distressed as I am myself."

"No, I don't," was her answer; "he will act with you, of course; but it is you I should like to take the principal part, if you will be so very kind."

"I am very much out of practice. It is a long time since I performed an operation. I daresay, though, my hand has not lost its cunning, and as you make such a point of it, and I am confident of the result, I will do my best, if you decide for the trephine, and Dr. Krankenheiler withdraws."

"Thank you, dear Dr. Roydon; thank you very, very much; and if my husband recovers he will thank you too. What a thing it will be if he should get better, after all, and you should be the means of bringing the murderer to justice!"

Roydon shifted his chair again.

"My eyes are weak to-day," he murmured; "I slept badly last night, and the sun is so very powerful."

"To be sure!" exclaimed Frau Roth, rising from her chair. "How inconsiderate

I am! I might have thought of that before. I will let down the blinds."

The next moment the room was half darkened, and very little of Dr. Roydon, except his white hair and the outlines of his face, could be seen.

CHAPTER X.

FRAU ROTH'S DREAM.

"I KNOW what it is to have weak eyes from want of sleep," said Frau Roth; "that is the worst of trouble; it prevents you from getting your natural rest. It struck me that you were looking ill when you called yesterday."

"Yes; I am fatigued with much travelling."

"I don't think fatigue does you much harm, if you can get your natural rest. Do you generally sleep badly, Dr. Roydon?"

"Oh, dear, no! It is only the last

few nights that I have suffered from insomnia."

"Caused by too much brain work, I suppose? Well for you, it is not some serious trouble or anxiety. Since this sorrow came upon us I don't think I have had one hour's really sound sleep; I dream so. Do you ever dream, Doctor?"

"Dream! I—yes—I mean no. At any rate, very seldom indeed, very seldom."

"You are very fortunate. I used not to, but now I never sleep that I don't dream—always about the same thing, and nearly always the same dream. You may think what about?"

"You husband?"

"The murder! I see it all. I see poor Heinrich sitting in his room quietly smoking his pipe, and thinking, very likely, of the children and me. He hears a foot-

step in the outer office, and, going to the door, sees a stranger, whom he greets in his usual genial way, and asks what he can do for him. The stranger says he wants to buy some bonds, and inquires the price. My husband names a price, and, going to the large safe, takes out the bonds, and lays them on the counter. Then he turns round to reach some more, and as he does so, the stranger, by a sudden movement, draws a hammer from under his coat—"

"A what?"

"A hammer, and with it strikes my husband a terrible blow on the head. Heinrich falls to the ground without a groan, and the stranger, seizing the bonds and thrusting them into his pocket, glides stealthily out of the office and down the stairs, and the next moment is lost to sight. That is my dream every night, and I sometimes wake screaming. Well for

you, Dr. Roydon, that you have nothing on your mind and never dream."

And with a heavy sigh Frau Roth sank back into her chair.

"And the mur—the stranger," said Dr. Roydon, after a long pause, in a voice that showed how much he felt for her, "what was he like?"

"Ah! that is the strangest part of it. His face was so blurred and indistinct that I could not make it out. Yet it seemed somehow that I should know it—that I had seen it before."

"Strange!"

"Is it not? I wonder if we shall ever know who did it, and whether my dream is true?"

"I wonder," was all the answer made by Dr. Roydon.

A minute or two afterwards Gretchen brought in the tea, and they were joined

by Helenchen. She had been in her father's room, and her worn face and subdued manner showed how deeply she was sorrowing for him.

"He is just the same," she said; "I cannot see the least difference. Poor father! Death would be a happy release for him."

"You are mistaken, my dear young lady," interposed Roydon, hastily. "He does not suffer at all. He is as completely oblivious as if he were in a deep sleep. Death would be no release for him, and life once given can never be recalled."

"Oh, if it were only possible to recall my father to life!"

"I believe it is quite possible, Fräulein Helene, as I have just been explaining to your mother, and as, if you will allow me, I will explain to you."

"Let it be done, mother; let it be

done!" cried the girl, when she had learnt the nature of Dr. Roydon's proposal. "It seems the only chance, and, except for the possibility of recovery, father, in his present state, is as much dead to us as if he was already in the grave."

"I think so, too," replied the mother, "but Dr. Krankenheiler is against it, and everybody says the operation is a very serious one. We must talk the matter over to-night, you and I and Mathilde, and Hermann—if he comes—and take advice, and perhaps Dr. Roydon will kindly call again in a day or two."

"I will call every day."

"I thank you very much. How shall we ever repay all your kindness? Must you really go?"

"I really must. My engagements may not be quite so pressing as those of Doctors Krankenheiler and Siebold, but for all that

I am a busy man, and just now more than usually occupied. Farewell, Frau Roth—farewell, Fräulein Helene." And the next moment he was gone.

"I never so much misjudged anybody in my life," exclaimed Frau Roth, drawing up the blinds, for she liked lightness better than gloom. "I used to think him cold and supercilious, and thought he was trying to take thy father in, and now he is proving our best friend! It will be a lesson for me I shall not soon forget. How ill he looks, though! And watch him walk—his gait is that of a tired man. His droshky has been waiting all this time. It will cost him at least a thaler. And I suppose he would take it amiss if we offered to pay him."

"Did he not owe father some money?"

"Yes, and he has repaid the greater part of it. That was another injustice I did

him in my mind; I thought he never would. It is a good idea, Helenchen. I will get Mr. Verelst to hint to him that the balance may stand over to suit his convenience, and when it comes to a settlement he will find that we are not ungrateful."

CHAPTER XI.

BOOKSELLER SIMON.

"HOME!" said Balder Roydon to the coachman; and then, getting into the droshky, and letting down one of the blinds, he drew himself into the darker corner, and pulling his broad-brimmed felt hat over his eyes fell into a reverie.

"This is terrible," he muttered, "to see him lying there like one dead, and yet know that he lives, and that his tongue may be loosened! And that dream! What does it mean—what can it portend? So circumstantial, and so—. But no, there is nothing in it; there can be nothing in it; dreams are material phenomena

caused by dyspepsia or an abnormal condition of the brain. I have no faith in this psychical nonsense. Dreams that seem to come true are, after all, mere coincidences; and still stranger coincidences, with which dreams have nothing to do, happen every day. . . . This dream of Frau Roth's, for instance, much as it startled me for the moment, is quite susceptible of explanation. Her mind is naturally full of the subject; she has sustained a severe nervous shock; there is functional derangement; the brain is weakened and excited at the same time. No wonder she dreams, and that her dreams should embody the various surmises and conjectures which she has heard suggested. They do nothing more. They are just the ideas of the police put into a dramatic shape, and coloured by a morbid imagination. She felt as if she ought to have known the stranger—that she had

seen him before, though his face was blurred and indistinct! If—one has heard of such dreams. But no, it is impossible! Again the police theory. She has heard the idea suggested that the men who committed the robbery were familiar with the premises, and knew Herr Roth's habits and the ways of the bank, and so she dreamed that if she saw their faces she would be able to recognize them. Nothing strange in that. Poor woman! . . . .

"To see that stricken family is almost more than I can bear. She is such a good soul, too, and genuine. I have been mistaken in her; I thought she was frivolous. And Roth is a generous, kind-hearted fellow. Until he began to insist on repayment nobody could have behaved better. It is something to know that he does not suffer. But this must not last. Like Frau Roth, I dream, and my sights are hideous.

Unless something is done I shall lose my nerve—if I am not losing it already—and then! . . . . There is only one way—the trephine. Frau Roth is quite willing, so is Helene, and we have only to get rid of that idiot, Krankenheiler—for I alone must perform the operation—and can, if I keep my nerve. So away with these alarms. There is no foundation for them, none whatever, absolutely none. I will be myself."

And Dr. Roydon, suiting the action to the thought, pushed up his hat, drew up the blind, and looked out.

They were on the Old Bridge, the sun had sunk below the horizon, the shadows of night were settling over the river, which swept in huge volumes under the arches—it had rained heavily during the preceding night—and the black clouds of another storm were gathering over the Bohemian hills.

"There is a Lethe," soliloquized the Doctor, "where one might forget for aye; and if things should ever come to such a pass—But bah! What a fool I am! Identity might continue, and memory survive—and I should have to leave my books. That reminds me."

"Kutscher!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Go to Bookseller Simon's, Pirnaesche Strasse."

"Yes, sir!"

"He has, perhaps picked up something good," said Roydon to himself, "and I have not called since I came back."

The droshky, once over the bridge, turned to the left, and, after traversing a series of narrow streets, stopped at the door of a bookseller's shop, the doorway and window of which were almost

blocked up with piles of second-hand literature.

"You need not wait," said Roydon, handing the coachman his fare; "I shall walk home."

Then he went into the shop, which, though a large room, was so crowded with volumes that there was hardly room to move. Making his way with some difficulty into the interior, Roydon found, sitting at a little table, in an alcove formed of books, a little old man, reading a huge black-letter tome by the light of a single candle.

"Good day, Herr Simon!" said Roydon.

"Good day, Herr Roydon!" returned the old man, rising from his chair with some difficulty; "welcome to my poor abode, most learned and book-loving doctor! What literary treasures bring

you from the modern Babylon, the commercial Mecca, the world's capital, and greatest emporium of books it ever knew?"

"Very few, I am sorry to say. I was there but a couple of days—only a Crasterii Lexicon, and a first Aldine edition of Dante. It is almost impossible to pick up anything cheap in London nowadays. There are too many collectors on the look-out, and the prices they give are simply ridiculous. A poor man has no chance."

"A poor man, ah, ah! Well, well, you have not done badly. A Crasterii Lexicon and an Aldine Dante are not bad, not bad by any means. What may you have paid for them, most learned doctor?"

"I got the two for 18*l.*, Herr Simon," said Roydon, his face lighting up with a smile of triumph.

"Eighteen pounds! One hundred and

twenty thalers! An Aldine Dante—of what date did you say?"

"Fifteen hundred and two."

"And the binding?"

"Brown calf, as perfect as the day it was turned out, and with gilt *gaufré* edges."

"And yet you say nothing is to be picked up cheap in London nowadays! Oh, most happy doctor, your lot has fallen in pleasant places! Is it of any use asking if you would sell the Dante—at a fair profit?"

"Not the least. I would rather buy than sell—if you have anything really good."

"Really good! I like that. Really good! Ah, ah! Yes, most noble bibliomaniac, I have something really good—something that it is happiness to see, elysium to possess. If you can remain in

the darkness an eyewink I will fetch it. This is the only candle I possess. Times are so bad, so very bad."

Taking the permission for granted, Herr Simon raised the candle above his head—and very queer in that position he looked—little and bent, long white hair hanging down his shoulders, a long white beard pendent on his breast, face seamed with the small-pox, which had destroyed one of his eyes, but so bright, black, and penetrating was the survivor, that the light seemed to come from it rather than from the candle—the living picture of an old bookworm, framed in his own books.

The cast of his countenance was unmistakably Jewish, and wore a mocking and almost malicious expression. As he paused for a moment, holding the candle in such a way that its glare fell on Roy-

don's face, the Doctor had an uncomfortable feeling that the old man, whom he secretly disliked, was reading his thoughts, and he saw him depart on his errand with a positive sense of relief.

CHAPTER XII.

A PRIZE.

In a few minutes Simon returned, holding in his hand a book. "Here it is!" he exclaimed; "here it is! What think you of this, my friend? See the old Italian binding of red morocco! Examine the beautiful borders; look at the illuminated initials. Saw you ever the like, Herr Doctor? Printed on vellum, too. A fine book—a rare book! Only another like it, printed on vellum, in the whole world. 'Eusebius de Evangelica Preparationæ, Venetiis, 1470.' Let you look at it? Of course I will."

Roydon took the volume in his hand,

and as he turned to the title-page his eyes kindled with enthusiasm.

"Yes, it seems to be a genuine copy. How did you come by it, Herr Simon?"

"How did I come by it, Herr Doctor? That is my business. Would you like to tell how you came by all your books, my curious friend?" At which question, as the old bookseller transfixed him with his solitary eye, the Doctor winced.

"Will I sell it? Oh, yes, I will sell it. I am not a millionaire like you, who can afford to buy books for the pleasure of gloating over them. But I must have money for that Eusebius, my friend—money—money! It is a grand book—a rare book; there is only another like it in all the world! Not a torn page, not an obliterated line. Consider the binding, feel the thickness of the vellum, regard the elegance of the borders! There are

men who would commit murder for a book like that, Herr Doctor."

"Murder! What do you mean, Herr Simon?" said Roydon, with a sudden start, and an angry glance at the old bookseller.

"Oh, I did not mean that you would commit murder for a book, well-born sir. Not at all, not at all. Only that some men would. That is why (lowering his voice) I hide my best books away beyond any ken but my own. I do the same with my money—when I have any—which is not often. If the people who murdered Herr Roth were to murder me, they would only get my old carcase for their pains."

Roydon, intent on the book, gave no heed to this remark—did not seem to hear it, indeed.

"Roth is a long time with his dying, isn't he?"

"He is not dying. He will get better," said Roydon, shutting the book with a snap, and throwing another angry look at Simon.

"I hope he may, but I don't think he will. I know more about books than skulls, Herr Doctor, but when a man has got his cranium smashed in three places, and lies insensible for a fortnight, he does not get better; and Krankenheiler says he is sure to die; and he will die, and the murderer will be found—"

"Krankenheiler is an old idiot!" retorted Roydon, almost boiling over with rage. "You say you know more about books than skulls. Well, I know more about skulls than books, and I say that Herr Roth will recover—or would, if he had not an old woman for a doctor. And his skull is not smashed in three places."

"Well, well, you need not get into a

passion about it. I care very little whether Roth recovers or not. But I would like the wretch who robbed and all but murdered him to be caught, if only to hinder him from serving others in the same way."

"What do you want for this Eusebius?"

"Thunder! how snappish you are! Oh, I want money for my Eusebius—money and fair words."

"I don't think I shall give you many fair words. Name your price."

"Not so fast, learned doctor, not so fast. I have not made up my mind yet. Consider the date, 1470; look at the elegant borders; regard the exquisite binding—"

"I will come again when you have made up your mind," said Roydon, laying the volume down, and making as if he were about to go.

"How very impatient you are! Let me think a moment."

"Well! Come, be quick about it. I want to go."

"You shall have the book a bargain, Herr Doctor. You will take care of it, and some time, perhaps—You know skulls and love books, and you shall have the Eusebius—for two thousand marks."

"You old Jew!" exclaimed Roydon, indignantly; "I'll—I'll see you in Abraham's bosom first," and again he turned to go.

"But consider the illuminated initials!—"

"Hang the illuminated initials."

"What will you give, then?"

"Farewell, Herr Simon. I must really go."

"Will you give eighteen hundred marks?"

"No!"

"Sixteen hundred?"

"Nor sixteen hundred."

"Well, I will make a great sacrifice. You shall have the beautiful and unique Eusebius for fifteen hundred marks, which is ridiculously cheap."

"I tell you I am going. But if you like to say a thousand marks I might—"

"Do you want to insult me, Herr Doctor?"

"Yes, if making you a fair offer be an insult. Farewell, Herr Simon," and Roydon moved off again.

"Stay!" exclaimed the old man, as the Doctor reached the door, "it is yours. But I shall lose by it—positively lose money by the transaction, Herr Roydon."

"Not you. You bought it for twenty marks from somebody who did not know

its value, and you will make a profit of five thousand per cent. You are the last man in the world to do a losing business, Herr Simon. When do you want the money?"

"At once, Herr Doctor, at once. I have much money locked up just now, and hardly know which way to turn."

"Well, come to my house to-morrow morning, and you shall be paid."

"And that small outstanding balance, Herr Doctor, could you also?—"

"About twelve hundred marks, is it not?"

"Twelve hundred and twenty-three, most learned doctor."

"You shall have that, too. Call about eleven, and I will be ready for you."

"Thanks, Herr Doctor, many thanks. I will be punctual. About eleven, you say, and about eleven I shall be with you.

Farewell, Herr Doctor, farewell. Many thanks, my dear sir, many thanks," and the old man held up his candle to light the Doctor through the piles of books to the door.

And then he returned, muttering, to the table.

"So he jeers me, and calls me an old Jew, and says I make a profit of five thousand per cent! I never liked the man, and I will be even with him yet. Yes, I will be even with him yet. How excited he got when I spoke of murder. He might have murdered somebody himself. Who knows? I daresay he has. He has money, too. A month ago he had none. Where has he got it? Borrowed it from Roth's bank, perhaps. But I heard a whisper that he was in debt there, and that old Roth had stopped his credit. How he flew up when I said

Roth would die! What is his interest in Roth, I wonder? I must find out. Well, I have sold my Eusebius—at a good profit, too, though not quite five thousand per cent., I wish it was—and I shall get the money to-morrow, and the old balance that has been standing over so long. Yes, I will be with you at elever dear Herr Doctor, I will be with you. Ah, footsteps again! Who is there?" (rising from his chair, and looking round).

"I beg your pardon, Herr Simon," said a gentleman, who was threading his way among the books, his hat in one hand, a cigar in the other. "My name is Von Ehrenberg, and if you are at liberty I should be glad to have a word with you."

CHAPTER XIII.

VON EHRENBERG'S COMMISSION.

"It gives me great pleasure to make your acquaintance, Herr von Ehrenberg," said the bookseller, raising his candle above his head, the better to see the new-comer, and then making a grotesque little bow. "A word with me? Certainly, my dear sir, certainly. Would you like to inspect my stock? I have some rare editions—also many books of a commoner sort—at ridiculously low prices, or maybe you have books to sell. In that case I shall be glad to see them, and offer you the very highest price I can afford. But won't you take a seat?"

(Pointing to a dirty, dilapidated, cane-bottomed chair.) "And, pray, don't put down your cigar, as, though I have ceased to smoke since a long time, I like the smell of good tobacco, and my nose tells me that yours is of high quality."

Von Ehrenberg resumed his cigar, and cautiously deposited himself on the dilapidated chair, for a sudden shock might have caused a disastrous collapse.

"I am sorry I cannot offer you a seat more suitable to your quality," added Herr Simon, "but when I have a little leisure, and some money to spare, I propose to attend an auction and buy a few articles of furniture, among other things, two chairs—possibly three—for the one you are now sitting upon is not quite up to your weight—"

"I thank you much. In the meanwhile this will do very well; I hope you will not

be greatly disappointed when I tell you that, though I am a lover of literature, both ancient and modern, my present purpose is neither to buy books nor sell them."

"What the mischief are you after, then?" asked the bookseller's little black eye.

"The purpose of my visit is to ask you to undertake a little commission—quite in your line of business, and for which you will, of course, be paid such an honorarium as will amply compensate you for your trouble."

"I am always willing to turn an honest penny in my line of business, sir—an honest penny, kindly observe, well-born sir."

"Of course. The fact of your being engaged in so high and intellectual a pursuit as the buying and selling of books is a sufficient proof that you could

undertake nothing of an equivocal character. I simply want you to make an inquiry without letting it be seen that you have any object beyond the gratification of professional curiosity; or, above all, that it has been suggested by me."

"The commission you propose is a secret one, then?" asked the old fellow, eyeing his visitor somewhat suspiciously.

"In the sense that, before being more explicit, I must ask you to keep entirely to yourself both the fact of this visit and my object it is a secret, yet neither a dangerous nor a compromising secret."

"You spoke of an honorarium?"

"Yes, and you yourself shall fix the amount."

"Generous, but somewhat vague. I might fix a million, and that might give rise to differences of opinion which it were desirable to avoid. In matters of

business, my dear sir, we cannot be too explicit."

"I will be explicit, then," said Von Ehrenberg, smiling. "I am taking your time now. For that I have the pleasure of paying you twenty marks" (laying a gold piece on the table). "The commission itself will take very little of your time—say an hour or two—and be easily executed. For that you shall have twenty marks more. It is not quite a million, I admit; yet I hope you will consider it, in the circumstances, a sufficient honorarium."

"Quite sufficient, well-born sir, quite sufficient, well-born sir," said Herr Simon, and as he pocketed the twenty-mark piece, his solitary eye became positively luminous. "I accept the price under the conditions you have named. Kindly say what services you demand of me in return."

"Good! Being a dealer in old books and rare editions, you naturally know Herr Doctor Roydon, the English bibliophile?"

"Surely. I have had many dealings with him. He was here only a little while ago. I know him well."

"I thought so. Well, I want you to find out if he has in his collection a rare edition here described" (handing Simon a piece of paper).

"'Cicero, de Finibus Bonorum et Malorum, 1st edition, 1471, folio, Venetiis, Joannes ex Coloniâ, illuminated and bound by Bizet, with the arms of Prince Eugène.' You say truly, *mein Herr*; a rare edition, a most rare edition. I would even myself, poor though I am, venture to give 500 marks for so great a prize, and I should not despair of finding a customer who would buy it from me at a fair profit. I must, however, warn you of one thing.

Dr. Roydon is no dealer, but a true bibliomaniac, and though he may possess this book, you will certainly not be able to buy it from him."

"I don't want to buy it. I only want to know if he has it."

"You surely don't mean—" Here the bookseller stopped short, and regarded his visitor with a look of suspicion and distrust.

"No," laughed Von Ehrenberg. "I don't mean to steal the book. Let me reassure you;" and, leaning forward, he whispered a few words in Herr Simon's ear.

"Ah!" exclaimed the old man, with flashing eye. "Is it, then, so? I am entirely at your service, high well-born sir. You may depend on my discretion, and to-morrow I will try to execute your commission."

"Thank you," said Von Ehrenberg,

lighting a second cigar. "There is also another thing I want you to do—find out if the Herr Doctor has in his possession a manuscript copy of the Koran, answering to the description you will find in this memorandum. I don't understand Arabic, but I daresay you do."

"Yes, yes, I read Arabic," returned Simon, eagerly. "Let me see! let me see! No!" (shaking his head), "I do not think Dr. Roydon has any such manuscript in his collection. Why, it would be worth a small fortune—'exquisitely written and ornamented, and believed to be one of the copies made in the thirtieth year of the Hedjreh, by order of the Caliph Othmar.' Apart from the literary and historic worth of the copy, a rich Mohammedan would give a king's ransom to rescue such a manuscript from the hands of an unbeliever. If it is really in

the possession of any Christian, you may take your oath that it has been stolen some time or other. A Mohammedan would rather perish than voluntarily part with so great a treasure—save to one of his own faith. No. I don't think Dr. Roydon can have this Koran."

"I don't say he has, mind. But if he has, and you can ascertain the fact, I will increase your honorarium to a hundred marks."

"Thank you, well-born sir. I will try to ascertain the fact for my own satisfaction also. I should like, above everything, to see that Koran. Still, I cannot believe.—But stay, an idea strikes me! Dr. Roydon has travelled in the East; he is not only a bibliomaniac, but a bold man; and —and men do strange things sometimes —there is no telling. At any rate, I will keep my eye open, Herr von Ehrenberg,

and let you know the result. Whither shall I write?"

"You need not write, I will call. Good evening, Herr Simon;" and replacing his hat, Von Ehrenberg left the shop as quietly as he had come in.

CHAPTER XIV.

WORSE THAN MURDER.

In the meanwhile, Dr. Roydon was hurrying homeward, with bent head and collar upturned, for the wind blew cold and rain was beginning to patter on the pavement. He had not far to go, but before he reached Halbe Gasse night and the storm overtook him; and it was only by thrusting the Eusebius under his coat that he kept it from harm.

As he let himself in with his latch-key Leah came out of the drawing-room.

"You are wet?" she said.

"Yes," he returned, laying the book on

the hall table. "I will go and change my coat, and be with you presently."

Leah took up the book with a gesture of displeasure, and carried it with her into the drawing-room, where, a few minutes later, she was joined by her father.

"A new prize!" she said, sarcastically, pointing to the Eusebius. "Where did you get this?"

"From Simon."

"How much?"

"A thousand marks, but it is worth twice the money."

"What is the good of that? You won't sell it. A thousand marks, and you were already in the man's debt! I am very sorry; it is madness."

"You are quite right, Leah. It is madness. Whenever I see a rare edition, I feel that I must have it, cost what it may."

"Why go in the way of temptation, then?"

"Why, indeed? Madness again, I suppose. But I promise you, Leah, that for the future I will keep out of temptation. I had not the least idea of buying this Eusebius, but when I saw it the temptation was too much for me. And it is really a great find. The copy is absolutely perfect. I do not think there is such another in all Europe—in private hands. How old Simon came by it Heaven only knows. However, that is not my affair. I am going to settle with him to-morrow, and I shall go to his shop no more."

Leah smiled incredulously; it was not the first time he had made a similar promise.

"It is as bad as gambling," she said, "and, I fear, will end badly."

"No, it won't," returned her father,

sharply, "since if the worst comes to the worst I can always sell my books. But enough of this. What have you been doing this afternoon?"

"Writing a long letter to Sonia."

"Take care, or you will be getting us into trouble. The Russian police have agents here, and the Saxon police are at their beck and call. If the truth were suspected and a requisition made, they would surrender us—you, at any rate—to Russia without the least hesitation. We are neither in England nor in Switzerland, remember."

"Oh, I shall take care. You do not suppose I am going to send this letter direct to Moscow, through the German post-office!"

"How will you send it, then?"

"By way of England. No, I shall do nothing to compromise us, I assure you.

When I return to Russia it must not be as a prisoner of the Czar. How did you find Herr Roth?"

"Exactly the same."

"And the trephining?"

"Frau Roth and Helene are quite willing. So, I think, will be Hermann and Mathilde, and the friends they propose to consult. The only impediment is the stupidity of that old Krankenheiler."

"He objects, then?"

"Yes; he thinks Roth would not survive the operation."

"And you think he would?"

"I do. But there is, of course, always the off chance that it might—"

"What?"

"Kill him!" said the doctor, in a scarcely audible voice.

"And then there would be no possibility of knowing who murdered him, a good

woman's life would be darkened for ever, and a great crime go unpunished. Oh! save the poor old man if you can, father, and I shall be as grateful to you as if you saved my own life."

Roydon turned deadly pale, and his lips twitched convulsively.

"You hesitate," she said, with a pained look.

"It is a great risk," he returned, speaking slowly and with evident effort. "I am a foreigner, and in no way concerned in the case, and if I undertake the operation and fail, everybody will turn against us, and we shall be hunted from the place—perhaps worse; and if I succeed it may be almost as bad."

"How so?"

"I shall incur old Krankenheiler's mortal hatred, and that of many of his colleagues—and he has great influence.

But I will do it, Leah, not only for your sake, but for the sake of poor Frau Roth and her children, and because if I save the old man's life it will be a satisfaction to my conscience. Yet it will be a great risk, greater than you think."

"It is only a risk of evil tongues, and it is not like you to heed idle talk," she said, smiling; "and so long as we do our best and act uprightly, what matters it what people say?"

And then, going to her father, she bent over his chair and kissed him on the forehead.

"You don't know how glad your decision makes me," she continued; "and if you succeed, as I am sure you will, you will save the life of a worthy man who has befriended you, and make a whole family happy. Think of that. It is worth the risk a hundred times over. I am afraid

I hurt you just now about that book. But you are a little mad about books, you know" (playfully), "and if I were not to hold you back I don't know what would become of you: you would ruin yourself outright."

"You are a good girl, Leah, and I—I am a bad man," said Roydon, with a deep sigh and a troubled look.

"Oh, no, no! The worst that anybody can say of you is that you are an enthusiast with a craze for old books. And now (kissing him again) I must leave you a few moments and see what Karoline is doing, or we shall have no dinner. Of all the German cooks we have had she is the most stupid. Unless you watch her continually, she will hardly do anything right which it is possible to do wrong."

"This is really too much," muttered Roydon, when he was left alone. "I shall save

the life of a worthy man who has befriended me, and make a whole family happy! The worst that can be said of me is that I am an enthusiast with a craze for old books! If she only knew! Never, never; whatever else happens, that must not be. A great risk, truly; a frightful risk. For all that, it is the best thing I can do. The old man could not. . . . No, it is impossible! The more I reflect the more I am convinced that my first alarm was baseless. As likely as not his memory will be utterly gone, and at the best he could not. . . . While, if I succeed, I shall earn his gratitude and theirs, and they will not press me for the remainder of the debt, perhaps forget it, and I shall in some measure atone. . . . If he dies then I shall have absolutely nothing to fear, absolutely nothing, and may sleep in peace. In either case this cursed suspense will be at end,

and even exposure could not be worse to bear. But I must keep up my courage. To go about with a hang-dog look would be like wearing my heart on my sleeve. God! how pale and haggard I am" (regarding himself in a mirror on the wall). "Yes, I must—I will."

Dr. Roydon went to the chiffonier, took out a bottle, and filling a large wine-glass with Cognac tossed it off at a draught.

"Not a wise proceeding in ordinary circumstances," he murmured, "but needs must when the devil drives, and I am devil-driven if ever a man was. Ah, this is a grand prize, a perfect windfall," (taking up the Eusebius tenderly, and regarding it lovingly). "Old Simon was a fool to part with it for a thousand marks. I would not sell it for double the money. They say I am book mad; never mind, I shall

soon have one of the finest private collections in existence. What a sale it would make! A sale! Perish the thought! It would break my heart. It would be worse than murder. While I live, never!"

CHAPTER XV.

NO MORE BLOOD!

EARLY next morning Dr. Roydon was busy among his books, cataloguing and arranging, separating the wheat from the chaff, and gloating over the rarer gems of his hoard. Only while thus occupied could he forget the past, or shake off, for a time, that foreboding of evil which, despite his efforts to conjure it away, continued to haunt his mind and disturb his rest.

At the first stroke of eleven there came a ring at the door.

"Simon!" said the Doctor, as he pulled the string that opened the door, and before the clock had done striking the old bookseller appeared on the threshold.

He was very spick-and-span—for him. He had evidently washed his face and combed his hair and beard, and though his finger-nails were in half mourning, his white and well-shapen, albeit wrinkled, hands were otherwise in fair order. His clothes, too, were of modern cut, being probably not more than thirty or forty years old, yet little worn, and as they were black and his voluminous cravat was white, the old gentleman looked eminently reverend and respectable.

"Good-morning, Herr Doctor," said Herr Simon.

"Good-morning, Herr Simon," echoed Roydon. "I am glad to see you."

And albeit he detested his visitor, he spoke truly. For though Dr. Roydon did not admit the merely curious to his library, it afforded him real pleasure to exhibit his treasures to experts like Simon,

who shared in his love for scarce editions, and could talk of them with knowledge. Just then, too, it was the only subject that took him out of himself, and to which he could give his mind without reserve.

Hence Simon was doubly welcome.

"How well you are looking this morning; as gay and sprightly as a youth in his teens," said the Doctor, with a laugh, as they shook hands.

"I am sorry I cannot return the compliment," answered Simon, tartly, for he saw in the observation a reflection on his age. "You are quite haggard, and your eyes have the weary look of a man who burns the midnight oil, or suffers from sleeplessness. I did not observe it yesterday; this sunshine lights up everything. You are too studious, worthy Herr Doctor. You must unbend the bow, or you will grow old before your time."

"I am bilious, that is all," said Roydon, hastily; "perhaps, as you suggest, from over-study. A day in the country and a little medicine will set me to rights. Will you have your money now?"

"As you are so kind as to offer it, I say 'yes, with thanks,' Herr Doctor. Money is the sinews of war, they say, and it is as necessary for the warfare of life as the equipment of armies. But money never stays long with me. Like you, I am always buying books, but unlike you I am always willing to dispose of them at a trifling profit."

"What do call a fair profit—cent. per cent.?" asked Roydon, ironically, as he handed the bookseller a pile of bank-notes.

"I often get no per cent. at all, and I am only too glad to get ten or fifteen when I can," returned Simon, sharply; "and when you consider that I have sometimes

to keep books for years, you must admit that it is very moderate."

"Too moderate, I should say. And these very moderate profits, do you invest them also in books?"

"Invariably. Except a reserve for the daily requirements of my business and for contingencies, such as sales by auction, all my fortune is in books."

"Your heir will be a fortunate man, Herr Simon. Might I, without being guilty of impertinence, ask who he is?"

"I have no heir," said the old man, sadly; "all my family have long been dead. If I have any kinsmen left, they are scattered far and wide—Heaven only knows where."

"Who will get your books, then?"

"What matters it who gets them? Perhaps I shall leave them to the synagogue, perhaps to the State."

"I will make a bargain with you,"

exclaimed Roydon, with the air of a man who has conceived a happy thought. "Leave them to me, and I will leave mine to you, in such a way that the survivor of either will become the other's heir."

"And a very fine bargain it would be for you, most illustrious doctor! Why, your expectation of life is at least twenty years, mine four or five; though I propose, God being willing, to live at least ten. A fine bargain, truly; yet, as I cannot take my books with me, it would really come to the same thing in the end."

"You consent, then?"

"No, my dear Herr Roydon, I do not consent. I would not put such a temptation in your way."

"Temptation to what?"

"To commit murder, most serene doctor!" replied the Jew, fixing Roydon with his glittering eye.

"Commit murder? You—you—what do you mean?" exclaimed Roydon, so much beside himself with indignation—or some other emotion—that he could scarcely articulate. "Do you dare to insinuate that I—I—"

"Oh, dear, no, Herr Doctor. I should be sorry either to think or insinuate that you are capable of committing murder. What idea could be so absurd? Don't you see that I was joking, my dear Herr Roydon, joking, merely joking?"

"Ah, ah!" returned Roydon, with a forced laugh. "Of course, of course. You could mean nothing more. Excuse my warmth, but I am so sensitive on the point of honour. I have such an abhorrence of the mere shadow of crime, that a grim joke of that sort is apt to put me out of temper."

"I crave your pardon for my indiscre-

tion, Herr Doctor, which I will take care not to repeat. Let me offer you a pinch of snuff in token of our reconciliation.

As he spoke, the bookseller produced a ponderous silver snuff-box, which looked ancient enough to have been in the family since the time of King Solomon.

"As we have not been estranged, no reconciliation is required," answered Roydon, coldly. "Thank you, I do not take snuff."

"I am sorry for that. A pinch of snuff clears the brain and quickens the mind—always providing you don't take too much. Talking of snuff reminds me of a curious old book, now in my possession, which it might suit you to buy, Herr Doctor, for it will interest you both as physician and man of letters."

"Indeed, what is it?"

"An Italian book, printed at Florence in 1620. It treats of poisons, and gives some

curious information as to the way in which, two or three hundred years ago, Italian wives used to get rid of their husbands, and Italian gentlemen of their rivals."

"An old story that, and such books are rather common. The toxicology of the Middle Ages does not interest me much. In the light of modern science it seems very crude. Those Italian poisoners owed their immunity much less to their own skill, than to the ignorance of the age in which they lived. But what has snuff to do with it?"

"Well, the book is more anecdotal than technical, and, among other things, there is a story of a man who stupefied an enemy by giving him a pinch of poisoned snuff, and then killed him."

"Nonsense! The thing is impossible," exclaimed Roydon. "Those old writers were credulous enough to believe anything.

All the same, I should like to see the book. Send it me up, and if it is any good, and not too dear, I will buy it from you. And now let me show you some of my books."

On this the Doctor took his guest to one of his most crowded cases, and the next hour was spent in discussing the merits of various bindings, examining rare editions, telling stories of lucky finds and celebrated sales.

All this time Simon said nothing, either of the "Colonia Cicero" or of the manuscript Koran; he was too shrewd to put Roydon on his guard, but he kept his little black eye very wide open indeed. He missed nothing, and often when the Doctor was talking he was looking. At length his patience received its reward. In a remote corner of an upper shelf he thought he saw the object of his quest. But he

did not take the volume down at once. He reached the one next to it, and, after asking a few questions about that, returned the book to its place. Then he took down the other. A single glance sufficed to show him that it was the book Von Ehrenberg had described—"Cicero de Finibus Bonorum et Malorum, &c."

"What a splendid example of early printing you have here, worthy Herr Doctor," he said, turning over the leaves. "How beautifully illuminated! The arms of Prince Eugène, too. This book must have a history behind it. At what sale may you have bought it?"

"I did not buy it at any sale," answered Roydon, whom the question seemed rather to take aback. "I bought it—let me see. Ah! yes, now I remember, I picked it up in a second-hand book-shop at Basel."

"Ah, at Basel! Rare books are to be

picked up there occasionally, I know. But such a 'Cicero Colonia' as this! Much?" said Simon, half closing his eye in a fashion which gave him an indescribable look of cunning and malice.

"I don't remember exactly. Something like six hundred marks, I think."

"Fortunate man! You are always picking up bargains. I should be glad to give eight hundred for such a copy!"

Simon had scored one point in the game which he and the unsuspecting Doctor were playing, but he could see nothing of any manuscripts.

"I shall have to ask," thought the bookseller; "he has got them hidden away somewhere."

"Where do you keep your manuscripts, learned Doctor?" he inquired at last.

"Under lock and key," said Roydon, carelessly. "Not that I have anything

very valuable; but manuscripts are more apt to stray away than books."

"If it would not be too much trouble I should very much like to have a look at them."

"I have really nothing worth looking at, Herr Simon. And" (feeling in his pocket) "I have left the key downstairs. Another time when you are here I shall be very glad."

"As you like, Herr Doctor," said Simon, seeing it would be no use to insist further. "The next time I have the pleasure of calling I hope the key will be at hand, for manuscripts interest me greatly. As you say, they are apt to go astray—so much more easily concealed than books, you know. By-the-bye, I heard a strange story the other day of a manuscript Koran of the thirtieth year of the Hedjreh being stolen from the Sultan's

library, at Constantinople. Heard you aught of it, Herr Roydon?" and the bookseller eyed him as if he would read his very soul.

The Doctor's countenance changed, and he returned Simon's stare with a look of intense suspicion.

"No," he replied haughtily, "I have not heard anything of it, and when I do hear such cock-and-bull stories I pay no heed to them. But you have not seen nearly all my books yet. The very best of them are in this smaller case. At any rate, those with the finest bindings. Look at these Elzevirs, for instance."

"He has it, on my soul he has it," thought Simon. "How did he come by it, I wonder, and what is the mystery Von Ehrenberg is trying to unravel?"

"Yes, you have some choice specimens. What a grand Bible this is! One of

the first Elzevirs turned out, I should think. Of what date?"

"Look at the title-page, and you will see—1586. And it has a history behind it, Herr Simon. See the inscription. It was an heirloom in the family of Ruvigny de Caillmotte, son of the last Deputy-General of the Reformed Churches of France, and commandant of the refugee Protestant regiments. He took service under the Prince of Orange, afterwards William IV., and died at the Battle of the Boyne."

"Truly a grand book, and worth a great price. How came you by it, dear Herr Doctor?"

"I got it for money and fair words, Herr Simon," returned Roydon, drily, "and both from the beauty of its binding, its fine printing, and its associations, I look upon that Bible as one of the gems of my collection."

"And what might?— But it is no use, you would not name a price. I was thinking of a rich customer from whom I have a standing commission to buy sixteenth and seventeenth century Elzevirs. Nothing would please him more than to have this Bible, and he would give money for it, Herr Doctor."

"I have no doubt he would—if he could get it—and so would a good many other people. But the money is not coined that would buy this Elzevir, Herr Simon."

The bookseller did not stay much longer. He had got all the information he was likely to obtain, and with proper apologies for taking up so much of the Herr Doctor's time he took his leave.

"I will not forget to send you that book about Italian poisons," he said as he and his host shook hands.

Roydon did not press him to prolong

his stay; he had had quite enough of old Simon for the present.

When his visitor was gone he lighted a cigar and threw himself into an easy chair.

"What can the old ruffian mean?" he soliloquized. "Is there more in this than meets the eye? Let me see! He hinted that I might commit murder to get his books. Then there was that 'Cicero,' and the manuscript Koran. Nobody knows I have it but Leah and Verelst, and a fool I was to show it even to them. But Leah never gossips, and I don't suppose Verelst knows of Simon's existence. And the pinch of snuff, and the Italian book! Coincidences? Perhaps. An attempt to find something out? More likely. But what interest can he have in my proceedings, and who can have set him on?—Nobody. It is—envy. He covets my books, and regards me as a rival. I

have got several things he would like to have, and my refusal to sell has roused all the ire of his sordid nature. . . . That makes him none the less dangerous, though, and I must be on my guard. Over-confidence would be as great a blunder as taking alarm at shadows. Still. . . . Yes, he must have some inkling. Even his mistake about the Koran shows that he was guessing—the Sultan's library, indeed!—with an object. What object? Ah! there is the rub. Anyhow, Simon is dangerous. I shall watch him; and if he does not hold his tongue and mind his own business, he will only have himself to blame for what may befall. I shall find a way. His blood be upon his own head. . . . But no, no, a thousand times no! Never again, never again! No more blood, please God, no more blood!"

And Balder Roydon, letting fall his

cigar, began pacing feverishly about the room, his sweat-bedewed forehead, twitching lips, and bloodshot eyes, showing the agony of his soul and the agitation of his mind.

CHAPTER XVI.

JACK'S PROMOTION.

THE greater part of a month passed away before any resolution was taken as to the proposed trephining of Herr Roth. Hermann was for it, and Verelst and Anspach strongly advised it; but Mathilde and several friends of the family were so much against it, that when it came to the point, Frau Roth, with whom the decision rested, shrank from sanctioning an operation which, as even Dr. Roydon himself was constrained to admit, might have immediately fatal results.

"You have no right," said Dr. Krankenheiler, "to try experiments with your husband's life."

This remark produced a deep impression on Frau Roth's mind. It did not occur to her that almost every surgical operation is, more or less, in the nature of an experiment, and that the ablest surgeon can not always command success. The question was one of expediency: whether the likelihood of success was greater than the probability of failure; and as on this point doctors disagreed, Frau Roth might well be excused for hesitating to decide.

All this while Herr Roth lay in the same unconscious state, like a man in a deep sleep, free from suffering, yet as impervious to outward impressions and as dead to his family as if he was already in his coffin.

"He may lie in that state for months," said Dr. Roydon, "and then go out like the snuff of a candle."

"Without a word?" said Frau Roth.

"Without a word."

This remark also made a deep impression on Frau Roth's mind, and she almost decided on the spot to have the operation performed without further delay. But in any event, and whatever might be the issue, it was clear that for a long time to come her husband would be in no condition to look after his business. So far, thanks to Anspach's diligence and Verelst's care, all had gone on well; but Verelst was only a volunteer; the duration of his stay in Dresden was uncertain; he might go back to Manchester at any moment, and though the cashier was an excellent accountant and thoroughly trustworthy, he had very little judgment, no manners, and lacked also other qualities essential for the effective management of a bank. This she knew from her husband, who, though he had not been in the habit of formally consulting

her about his business, always told her what was going on and how he was prospering. It was a very good business, as times went, and she was anxious, for the sake of her children, that it should not only be kept going, but carried on with such energy as would prevent any sensible diminution of profit. To this end she must have an efficient manager, and who could be better than Verelst? She knew from her husband that he had good business capacity, she knew from her own observation that he was wide-awake and intelligent; she felt that she could trust him implicitly, and it counted greatly in his favour that he was an Englishman. And then, if this trouble would only pass, perhaps he and Helenchen.— Yes, she would ask Verelst to take the post of manager (director she called it) until either her husband got better, or (as she put it

to herself) "something happened." And even in that event, it would be within her discretion either to continue the bank or dispose of it as a going concern, for Heinrich had long since made his testament, and she knew all its provisions.

When she mentioned this idea to Jack he was both surprised and touched.

"I know you will do your best for us," she said, "and I feel sure that in making you this proposal I am acting as Heinrich would have me act, if it were possible for him to know what is going on. I do not, of course, expect you to work for nothing, as you have been doing. You must have a salary, and a liberal one, for I shall want you to take the entire responsibility, and it will be no light one."

Jack desired nothing better than to stay at Dresden—for several reasons—yet he felt that it would not be right for him to accept

Frau Roth's offer without consulting Hector, who was both his brother and his partner, but he assured her that in any case he would stay as long as he possibly could, and render her all the help in his power.

So he wrote to his brother, and in due course came the answer, which was characteristically business-like, and to the point. "By all means accept Frau Roth's offer," wrote Hector, "but not for any fixed time; let it be understood that you may leave at a month's, or, at any rate, three months' notice. The rumour I told you about is doing us harm; the business is not increasing. I am rather afraid it is falling off a little, and until I see my way more clearly I must keep expenses down to the lowest possible point. If Frau Roth will give you enough to keep you comfortably—and I have no doubt she will—that will be

so much to the good; and as I shall, of course, continue to credit your account with your share of the profits, you will be making money at both ends."

And then Hector went on to say that he was more than ever convinced, though he could produce no proof, that the story came from somebody at Balder's bank. Mr. Balder, whom he had consulted, recommended him to take no notice of the slander. "Let it alone," he said, "and it will die a natural death." At the same time he was cold and reserved, and Hector could not help thinking that the old banker knew more than he chose to avow, and that somebody had poisoned his mind —perhaps old Baxendale, who had never been a particularly warm friend of his, and was now so distant in his manner that they could hardly be said to be on speaking terms. The clerks in the bank were also

less friendly than they had been, and there was clearly some sinister influence at work, but who was at the bottom of it he could not ascertain. If people would only speak out and accuse him to his face he should know what to do, but dark hints and whispered innuendos it was impossible to challenge, and a man's reputation might be talked away before he could bring his slanderers to book. He had lost two or three good accounts, as he believed, for no other cause than these hideous rumours, and new business was not coming in as it ought to do. On the other hand, several of his customers had assured him of their unabated confidence, and old Roach not only spoke up for him whenever he had a chance, but doubled his deposit, and told Hector that "if so be as he wanted a few thousands, just to let him know."

"So you see," concluded the letter, "it

is not so bad as it might be, and time is in my favour, and, what is worth more than anything, I have a clear conscience. But by all means stay where you are until this has blown over, or we have spotted that infernal scoundrel with the snuff-box, and that would certainly be the most satisfactory solution."

Reading between the lines Jack could see that Hector was a good deal more concerned than he liked to say, and his first impulse was to throw up everything, return to Manchester, take his share of the trouble, and give his brother such help as he might. But a moment's reflection showed him the unwisdom of such a proceeding. He would merely be adding to Hector's responsibilities, with little prospect of doing him any great good; and he did not want to leave Dresden. So he told Frau Roth that he accepted her offer,

either side to be at liberty to terminate the engagement at a month's notice.

"Make it three months," said Frau Roth.

"If you wish it, certainly," returned Jack.

"And about salary?"

"What would you think fair?"

"Nay, what would you? I want you to fix it yourself?"

"That is rather an invidious task. But when I was in a situation at Manchester I had 400*l*."

"Eight thousand marks?"

"Yes."

"Very well, let it be so. If you are satisfied, I am."

It was a good deal for Dresden, but Frau Roth wanted to secure Jack's services, and as she had a strong conviction that he would one day be her son-in-law,

the money would not be going out of the family—an important consideration in her eyes.

Jack said he was quite satisfied, and thanked Frau Roth for this new proof of her confidence.

"It is true, I put great trust in you, Herr Verelst," was the answer, "and I am sure you will justify it."

Jack said he would try, and in his own mind he had no more doubt that he was equal to the duty he had undertaken than that he was worth the salary Frau Roth had agreed to give him. Self-distrust and self-depreciation were fortunately not among his failings, for a man who has not confidence in himself cannot expect others to be more trustful.

"I am very glad it is settled, and that you have so kindly fallen in with my wishes," added Frau Roth, who felt that

she had done a good thing. "It is a great weight off my mind. I shall now be able to give all my time and thoughts to poor Heinrich. I will write to Anspach, and tell him what has been arranged. I think it had better come from me."

"By all means; and if you could increase his salary by two hundred marks or so it might—"

"Console him for any disappointment he may possibly feel. Let it be so. I will mention it when I write. All the same, he must know quite well that he has not the necessary qualifications. Ah! here comes Helenchen. She will be glad to know. Herr Verelst has accepted my proposal, and agrees to stay—I hope for a long time—for at the best it will be a long time before thy poor father is fit for business."

The roses returned to the girl's cheeks as

if by enchantment, and her eyes brightened with pleasure.

"You are very kind, Herr Verelst, and we are so much obliged to you," she said, demurely. "It will be such a weight off mother's mind."

"That is what I have just been telling him," put in Frau Roth, briskly. "It is so much better that the director should be a friend, and but for him we should have had to engage a stranger. And we have become so friendly, that we might have known each other all our lives. He is almost like one of the family."

Helenchen blushed again; and when Jack afterwards turned things over in his mind a doubt crossed it as to whether he had acted altogether wisely. He was now more than ever bound to the Roths; Helene's partiality for him was palpable, and when it became known

that he preferred Leah there would be trouble.

But suppose Leah did not prefer him?

The contingency was at least possible. Her nature was less transparent than Helenchen's. Much as he liked Leah he could not read her, and while poor Herr Roth lay between life and death it would not be altogether the thing to talk of love, and resolve his doubts by asking her to decide his fate; and prudence whispered that in the present circumstances it would not be wise.

CHAPTER XVII.

DR. KRANKENHEILER RETIRES.

"HERE is something that will interest you, Frau Roth, and, as I hope, put an end to your hesitation. Read this."

The speaker was Dr. Roydon, and, as he spoke, he handed Frau Roth a German medical paper, in which was a marked passage, giving an account of a successful trephining operation recently performed at Halle. Dr. Roydon pointed out that the case bore a striking analogy to Herr Roth's. The injuries, albeit inflicted by the kick of a horse, were substantially the same. The patient lay for several days in an unconscious state; the doctors were divided in

opinion as to the expediency of an operation; one bolder than the rest undertook it on his own responsibility, and the patient had now full possession of his faculties, and was in a fair way for recovery.

"It is quite providential!" exclaimed Frau Roth, excitedly, when she had fairly mastered the purport of the passage, and its technicalities had been explained by Roydon. "With this in my hand I shall be able to meet all gainsayers, and if Dr. Krankenheiler does not like to undertake the operation he may retire from the case, and I will put it in your hands, Dr. Roydon."

"As you like, my dear Frau Roth. It is for you to decide."

"I have decided, and this time for good. Krankenheiler will not yield, of course. What he says he sticks to. But I must

give him the option; a man of his position, you know—"

"Must be treated with every courtesy. That goes without saying; and my position here as a foreigner is so delicate that I should like to err, if we err at all, on the side of over-punctiliousness. I would rather make friends than enemies."

"So would I. But when it is a question of restoring my husband to life, I might almost say, I don't care whom I offend. If Dr. Krankenheiler likes to take offence, let him. All the same, I shall treat him with every possible consideration. I am not sure whether he intends to come with Siebold to-morrow; but I shall write and ask him to do so, because, now we have decided, the sooner the operation is performed the better—don't you think so?"

"Decidedly. Delays are always dangerous, and in my opinion the longer the

operation is put off the greater the risk. If it had been performed immediately after —ah!—after the accident."

"No accident, doctor; say murder."

"Well, then, murder, if you prefer the word—although it is not murder yet—and, I hope, never will be. I mean, if the operation could have been performed sooner, I should have counted with greater confidence on a successful issue than even I do now."

"How I wish you had been here when it happened!"

"When what happened?"

"The robbery."

"Ah! Yes—exactly; so do I," replied Roydon, with a strange smile.

"You would have been such a help, and I do believe Heinrich would have been well long since. But better late than never, you know (smiling). We shall have him

talking in a day or two, and one of the first questions I shall ask him will be (sternly) who is the man?"

"You think he will be able to tell you?"

"I hope so. Don't you?"

"I am not at all sure. I should think it is rather doubtful. For a fracture such as that sustained by your husband may possibly affect the memory and give rise to illusions."

"Oh, Doctor, you surely don't mean that Heinrich will be—mad!" cried Frau Roth, with a look of alarm.

"No, no, I don't mean that at all; only, that while Herr Roth has been lying all this time in seeming lethargy his brain may have been more or less at work. In other words, he may have had dreams, and his dreams and the memory of past events will be so mixed up together that we shall not be able to distinguish truth from

reality, fancy from fact, and, as likely as not, he will confound his assailant with somebody else—if he recognizes him at all, which is very doubtful. I doubt whether he will be able to make any statement which would be received as evidence in a court of justice. That is all."

"Ah! that is all," returned Frau Roth, with a sigh of relief. "Well, others may do as they like, but I shall believe what Heinrich says. It is not in his nature to accuse anybody falsely; and, mark my words, Dr. Roydon, sooner or later we shall know who did it."

Dr. Roydon looked at his watch.

Frau Roth took the hint.

"The moment I have seen Dr. Krankenheiler I will let you know the result," she said. "But he is sure to give the same answer as before, and I should like the operation to be per-

formed soon—if possible, the day after to-morrow."

"I will hold myself in readiness."

"You will act with Dr. Siebold, I suppose?"

"Certainly."

"Thank you very much. You are kindness itself, Dr. Roydon. And now I will let you go, for I can see you want to be off."

It turned out as Frau Roth anticipated. Dr. Krankenheiler did not see in the operation at Halle any reason for altering his mind.

"It is just a chance," he said, loftily; "a rare exception, and you know, it is the exception that proves the rule. Besides, I am not at all sure that the case presented precisely the same features as that of the Herr Banquier. The fracture may have been less severe, the disturbance of

the nervous system less profound; or the patient may have been in such a condition that trephining was merely the alternative of death. You may think me an old fogey, Frau Roth, but these kill-or-cure operations are not to my taste, and if you are really resolved to have your husband trephined, I must do as I have said—withdraw from the case."

"I should be very sorry for that, Herr Doctor, but" (with a great effort, for Krankenheiler's manner was very imposing) "it is best to speak plainly—I am resolved."

"Is that indeed so? I hope the experiment will prove a success; but I fear you have signed your husband's death-warrant. Can I offer you a seat in my droshky, Herr Colleague?"

"Perhaps Herr Siebold does not take the same view of the matter as you do, Dr.

Krankenheiler," said Frau Roth, pale with indignation. "If you will kindly stay a few minutes, Dr. Siebold, I should like to speak to you."

"Surely. It will give me great pleasure to do so," returned the junior, quietly, with a half-amused, half-deprecatory glance at his colleague.

"You, Siebold!" exclaimed Krankenheiler, with a reproachful air; and then he marched majestically out of the room.

Half an hour later Frau Roth sent a note by a special messenger to Halbe Gass, informing Dr. Roydon that Dr. Siebold would be glad to meet him in consultation the next morning at eleven o'clock, and that it was proposed (he being agreeable) to perform the operation on the day but one following.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TREPHINING.

At the pressing instance of her children, who feared that continued confinement to the house might injure their mother's health, Frau Roth occasionally took the air—spent half an hour in the garden, or had a droshky drive to Weisser Hirsch or Löchwitz, or into the town, when she generally called at the bank to have a talk with Jack and Anspach, and inquire how things were going on. She made one of these visits shortly after the two doctors had held their consultation, but on this occasion less with a view to business than to inform Verelst that the operation was

to take place on the following day, and to ask him to be present. She could not bear to be present herself, she said, even if the doctors would let her, and Hermann —well, Hermann was not altogether to be depended upon—and she would like some man (emphasis on the man) to be there, on behalf of the family, who could tell her all about it afterwards.

"I know it is a great deal to ask," she said, "and some people cannot stand anything of the sort. The sight of a cut finger was almost enough to turn my poor husband sick. But I think your nerves are pretty strong, and you have always been so friendly that I thought I would rather ask you than anybody else."

With this request it was impossible to refuse compliance—albeit Jack had the common horror of surgical operations, and he knew what a harrowing scene there

would be if, as was quite possible, Herr Roth should not survive the ordeal—and he said that, though he was not so sure about his nerves as she seemed to be, he would do whatever she wished.

"I knew you would," answered Frau Roth, with a sigh of relief. "I could not bear the idea of nobody being with him at such a time but the two doctors and a hospital assistant; and they say that if I or any of the family were present we might faint, or say or do something that might distract their attention and disturb the patient at the most critical moment; and I daresay they are right. The time is eleven o'clock, Herr Verelst. To-morrow at this time my dear Heinrich will either be restored to us, or—oh! I cannot bear to think of it. And yet I believe we are doing right. Don't you, Herr Verelst,—don't you think we are doing right?"

And the poor woman regarded him piteously, with tear-streaming eyes.

"I have not a doubt you are. It is a risk, certainly, but we can only do our best, and you are acting precisely as I should act myself in similar circumstances, and as I am sure Herr Roth would have you act, if it were possible to consult him."

"Do you really? You have no idea what a comfort it is to hear you say so; for I am at times so distracted with fear of doing wrong that I almost lose my senses; and if—Yet no, I won't give way, God will be good to us this time, I feel sure He will. But I am keeping you from business, Herr Verelst, and I think there is somebody waiting to see you. You won't forget the time—eleven o'clock?"

"You may depend on me, Frau Roth; I will be there in good time."

Jack was as good as his word. Before eleven o'clock next morning, and a few minutes in advance of the doctors, he was at the house in Schiller Strasse. All the members of the family, including Hermann —of whom, since the concert at the Brühl Terrace, he had seen very little—were in a state of intense and painful, yet suppressed excitement. They went about on tiptoe and talked in whispers, for now, when the critical moment approached, all realized, as they had never realized before, that it was a case of life or death. In a few minutes the husband and the father would either receive a reprieve or be lost to them for ever.

Frau Roth, though her hectic cheeks and anxious eyes betrayed the intensity of her feelings, remained outwardly calm, and received the doctors and their assistant as quietly as if they were making an ordinary visit.

"You will find everything ready," she said; and then, with a whispered request to Jack to come to them "when it was over," and a last loving, compassionate glance at her unconscious husband, she left the room, and joined her daughter in another part of the house.

"Can I be of any use?" asked Jack.

"No," answered Siebold, rather shortly; "you are not used to this sort of thing, and might do more harm than good. We have all the help that is necessary" (pointing to the assistant).

So with folded arms and knitted brows John Verelst watched the operation which was either to kill or cure his friend, and, perchance, reveal the mystery of his attempted murder.

Though Herr Roth was unconscious, and insensible to pain, it was considered expedient to administer ether, for if the ope-

ration succeeded the sense of feeling would at once come back, and complete immobility was imperative; the slightest involuntary movement on the part of the patient might be attended with disastrous results.

Dr. Roydon took the principal part; that is to say, he handled the trephine, and, as it seemed to Jack, deftly and carefuly. Though he lost no time, he was cool and deliberate. When a hole is being bored in a man's skull flurry or hurry may prove as fatal as erroneous judgment or lack of skill. Dr. Siebold stood by, and when the depressed bone had been raised to its proper place he helped his colleague to remove the instrument and cover up the wound with compresses, which had been moistened with a mixture of water and carbolic acid. After being healed the orifice would probably have to be fitted with a silver plate.

When all was over, and the patient had been placed in a comfortable position, the four men—the two doctors, their assistant, and Verelst—waited round the bed to see what would happen when the anæsthetic, which had been repeatedly applied during the operation, had lost its potency.

Jack, happening to divert his gaze for a moment from Herr Roth to Dr. Roydon, was startled to see the change which had come over the latter. Only a few minutes before as impassive as a statue, his pale face and twitching lips now bespoke the very extremity of anxiety and suspense.

"He has noticed some unfavourable symptom," thought Jack, "and the poor old man is either dying or dead."

But shortly afterwards—though to those looking on it seemed an age—Herr Roth opened his eyes and looked round

with a bewildered, startled, and wondering look, that was almost painful in its intensity—like a man awakening in a world he had never seen before.

"Good!" said Siebold, in an undertone. "The operation has succeeded, Herr Colleague."

"Speak to him," whispered Roydon to Verelst; "your voice will sound more familiar to him than mine."

"How do you feel, dear Herr Roth?" asked Jack, leaning over the old man's pillow. "You have been very ill, but now, I hope, you will soon be yourself again."

Herr Roth seemed more bewildered than ever. Then, looking as a man does who tries hard to remember something, he attempted to speak, without, however, saying anything coherent, and pointed to his lips.

"He wants to drink—he wants to drink," said Doctor Siebold, reaching a glass of acidulated water.

"Trink," echoed Herr Roth, with a smile such as a little child gives when it has mastered its first word.

The two doctors exchanged significant glances.

"Good?" said Siebold.

"Gug—gug—goo—d," repeated Herr Roth, smiling as before.

Then the doctors, after closely scrutinizing their patient, held a whispered consultation in a corner of the room.

When they had done, which was in about three minutes, Roydon returned to the bed and drew Jack away.

"Frau Roth is dying to know the result," he said. You can say that it has succeeded to admiration—that her husband is restored to consciousness—and, as

we believe, to sanity; but—he has lost his memory."

"His memory! What?—" exclaimed Jack.

"Softly, softly, my dear sir, remember we are in a sick room. I say that Herr Roth's memory seems to be entirely gone. He has forgotten everything, even how to talk."

"He is an idiot, then?" said Verelst, in dismay.

"Not at all. Is a baby an idiot? And Herr Roth's brain, unlike an infant's, is fully developed. His mind is not affected in the least. He will have to learn everything afresh, that is all. I mean that, as he is restored to consciousness, and will almost certainly be restored to health, loss of memory is a comparatively small drawback."

"But will he ever get his memory back, do you think?"

"Perhaps—I am not sure. It is quite possible. Yes, it is quite possible, and you will be fully justified in encouraging Frau Roth to think so. And now go and tell her; it is a pity to keep her in suspense a moment longer than is absolutely necessary, especially when you are the bearer of good news."

Roydon spoke briskly and cheerfully, and Verelst observed with some surprise that he seemed not only pleased, as was quite natural in the circumstances, but positively exultant. The change that had come over his countenance and manner during the last few minutes could not have been more marked if he had been himself saved from some great danger, or even rescued from the jaws of death.

"What an interest he takes in the case!" thought Jack. "I did not give Roydon credit for so much sympathy."

Frau Roth saw at once that he brought good news.

"He lives!" she gasped; "I can read it in your face."

"Yes, the operation has succeeded, Dr. Roydon says, to admiration, and there is every likelihood of Herr Roth's speedy recovery."

"Thank God!" she exclaimed, fervently. "Oh! children, thank God for this great mercy. But let me go to him! I may, may I not?"

"Wait a minute, Frau Roth, there is something else."

And then came the painful part of his task. But he made as light of the loss of memory as possible—in his anxiety to spare Frau Roth and her children, going, perhaps, further than Roydon's account warranted him in doing.

"Then he won't know us," said the much-tried woman, with a look of bitter disappointment. "It will be almost as bad as it was before."

"Oh! no, Frau Roth. He has survived a terrible operation. He is conscious, his mind is untouched, and his memory and power of speech will come back."

"You really think so?"

"I am sure," replied Jack, affecting a confidence he did not quite feel. "I have heard of such cases before. It may come back gradually as he gets stronger, or all at once, just as you remember some long-forgotten incident of your childhood. The chord once touched, you know. In the meantime you will have to teach him to talk, and judging by the quickness he showed just now, he will make rapid progress."

"But I may go to him?" asked Frau Roth, impatiently.

"I think so. At any rate, the doctors said nothing to the contrary."

"Then I will go. Stay here, children, until I come back."

CHAPTER XIX.

HERMANN EXPLAINS.

Frau Roth came back in a few minutes. She had quite recovered her equanimity, and intimated that she thought everything was for the best. The doctors, she said, enjoined perfect quietness. The dear father must on no account be disturbed. His recovery depended in great measure on freedom from excitement and agitation, and for this reason it was, perhaps, quite as well that the faculty of memory should remain temporarily in abeyance. Dr. Roydon thought that, as the patient grew stronger, his memory would gradually return. Full power of expression would

probably precede the power of recalling events. As likely as not, he would be able to talk as well as ever in the course of a few days. In the meanwhile all that could be done was to watch him assiduously, and leave as much as possible to nature. Worrying him with questions was strictly forbidden. On the other hand, after suppuration had ceased and all danger of inflammation was past, it would be well to talk in his presence pretty freely, play on the piano, and, in short, do anything that might restore the missing link in the chain of associations whose absence it was that rendered him oblivious to the past.

This explanation given, Frau Roth said that each of the girls and Hermann might go for a moment into the room (separately) and look at their father. He must then be left entirely to the nurse, the assistant from the hospital, and herself.

Jack, seeing that his help was no longer needed, and having work to do, slipped out of the house, without any formal leave-taking. As he reached the garden gate, he was overtaken by Hermann.

"I will walk down the road with you a little way," he said, "if you will let me."

"Certainly," answered Jack, rather surprised by this proposal, as since the night on which they had sworn fast friendship the young fellow, so far from having sought his company, had seemed to avoid him.

"The father will get better now, don't you think?" he went on, putting his arm within Jack's.

"I hope so, and—yes—I really think so."

"Still, there is a doubt."

"Naturally, in so grave a case, and after so severe an operation. I may say

to you, though I would not like to say it to your mother or sisters, that in my opinion, and, unless I am mistaken, in the opinion of Dr. Siebold, your father is by no means out of danger."

"Ah, is that so?" returned Hermann, dropping the somewhat flippant tone which he had hitherto adopted. "But Dr. Roydon, what says he?"

"Well, Dr. Roydon is decidedly the more sanguine of the two. Yet neither of them said very much. My impression is rather based on what they did not say, and being little more than inference, may therefore be wrong."

"Dr. Roydon is very clever, don't you think?"

"Very, and much kinder and more sympathetic than I once thought him. I used to think he cared for nothing in the world but his books. Your father thought

so, too. But if Roydon were his own brother he could not show greater concern or be more truly kind."

"It is so, and he has made us his debtors for ever. He is a very fine fellow. Have you seen much of them—the Roydons, I mean—since, since we escorted them home that night?"

"Not very much."

"Nor I. I am afraid I made an awful fool of myself; and, to tell the truth, I have not had the courage to show up since. Did I look very drunk?"

"Well, it was pretty evident you had been taking pretty kindly to your liquor. But I do not think you committed yourself much before the Roydons. To tell the truth, you talked rather brilliantly."

"Do you really mean that?"

"Yes."

"Well, I should not have thought it.

But after I have had about twenty glasses of lager I can talk—that's a fact. The misfortune is that on such occasions I generally talk too much, and if I did not do so with the Roydons I did afterwards with you. I had no right to compromise Helenchen, and if I had not exceeded my usual allowance of lager—which is four glasses before noon, and six after—I shouldn't have done. She never said a word to me, of course, but I thought you were sweet on each other, and that if I helped you, you would help me—that was all."

"Oh, that was all," said Jack, drily.

"Nothing more, I assure you. For it is quite true; I am desperately in love with Leah Starkova, and it was very kind of you to say I might count on your help."

"I beg your pardon," returned Verelst, bluntly, "I said nothing of the sort."

"What! Do you mean to say that you didn't say so?" retorted the young man, coming to a sudden halt, and looking at Jack as if he would like to eat him.

"I do mean to say that I didn't say so, and if our friendship is to continue, you will be good enough to drop that bullying manner and conduct yourself like a gentleman," answered Verelst, with quiet firmness.

"Heaven and earth! do you doubt my word?" was the fierce rejoinder; and for a moment it seemed as if there was going to be a desperate quarrel; but seeing that Jack did not flinch, or for some other reason, Hermann beat a hasty and not very dignified retreat. "I beg your pardon," he said; "I suppose it was that confounded lager. When I take more than fifteen glasses I am rather apt to say things I forget, and imagine things

I never said. But you will help me, all the same, dear friend, won't you?" (again taking Jack's arm).

"What a strange fellow you are!" laughed Verelst. "A minute ago you were fit to eat me, and now you call me dear friend. But about your request. How can I help you? You would surely not court Fräulein Roydon by proxy, would you?"

"But you might mention my name occasionally. Speak a good word for me, you know."

"As if that would help you! Do you understand Leah Starkova so little as to suppose that she would take one man on the recommendation of another? I never met a girl with so strong a will and so independent a judgment. I don't think she would accept you—or anybody else—even at the bidding of her own father. If

you win Leah, my friend, it must be by your own merits."

"Then I fear I have a very poor chance," returned the youth, disconsolately, "for though when I have got outside my seventh glass I feel that I am a very fine fellow, and could do almost anything, I cannot, being in cool blood, affirm that I am exactly a shining light. I can paint pretty well—although my poor father could never be brought to think so—I have studied art devotedly, and I really know something about it; I have fought forty duels, and, as you see, have got a few cuts on my figure-head—and that goes a long way with a German maiden. I am not quite sure, though, that it would go as far with an English girl. On the other hand—you see I am being frank with you, my friend—on the other hand, I have a few faults, of which no one is more conscious

than myself. I am a desultory worker, and not particularly in earnest about anything. I am too fond of wine, woman and song, and—there is no use denying it—I drink too much beer. All the same, girls have loved worse fellows than Hermann Roth—don't you think they have, friend Verelst?"

"Undoubtedly; and I daresay there are girls to whom your very faults would be a recommendation."

"Very likely; but do you think Leah Starkova is one of those girls? That is the question."

"One that I cannot answer. You will have to find it out for yourself."

"I mean to do. I shall put the question. This suspense is maddening me. Whenever I think of Fräulein Roydon I am all on fire. Yes, I shall put the question."

"Now?"

"You mean that it would not be seemly to make love while the life of my father is trembling in the balance. No, not now. I will wait until he is out of danger, and then I shall ask Leah to put me out of my misery.

"You are conversant with my father's affairs," continued Hermann, after a few minutes' silence; "do you know how much he is worth? It is a point as to which he and my mother have always kept me in the dark."

"Even if I knew I don't think I should be justified in telling you, Hermann; but, as it happens, I don't know," returned Jack, cooly.

"What a model man of business you are! I don't wonder at their making so much of you. And now I must leave you. I want to have an hour in the picture gallery. Farewell."

CHAPTER XX.

JACK RESOLVES.

"It is not very difficult to read Mr. Hermann," thought Jack, as he walked down Schloss Strasse. "He means to propose to Leah, in any case, and is thinking about ways and means, and wants to know how much he is likely to inherit. If he gets 20,000*l.*, and I daresay he may, he won't look at his father's death as an altogether unmitigated misfortune, the young ruffian. But whatever else she may do, Leah won't have Hermann Roth. All the same, I can imagine her father favouring his suit, especially if the old man dies, and the young fellow comes into his fortune. As far as

money goes it would be a good match for her."

And then it occurred to him that he had had not yet conveyed to Dr. Roydon Frau Roth's message about the balance of the loan, and after business was over he went to Halbe Gasse, partly for this purpose, partly, perhaps, for another.

Leah was alone.

"My father is amongst his books, as usual," she said. "Will you go upstairs to him, or wait till he comes down? I don't think he will be very long."

Jack decided to wait. Dr. Roydon was busy, and he had nothing very pressing to say to him; nothing that would not keep.

Leah seemed pleased. Verelst had never before seen her in such high spirits. For the time, at least, her eyes were free from that dreamy, far-away look which he

thought must have its source in the memory of some great sorrow or the apprehension of coming evil.

"I am going to ask you to do me a favour, Mr. Verelst," she said.

"I am entirely at your service. I will do anything you like," answered Jack, perhaps rather more warmly than the occasion absolutely required.

"That is saying a great deal," replied Leah, smiling. "Suppose I take you at your word, and ask you to render me a really great service—how then?"

"Anything in my power I will do. Try me," exclaimed Jack, still more earnestly than before.

"Well," gravely, "the time may come when I shall put your friendship to the test, but now" (again smiling) "all I want you to do is to get me two letters posted in Manchester."

"With pleasure. But how? I don't quite understand."

"They are letters for Russia, which for my own sake, and the sake of others, it is not expedient to post here—a postmark tells tales sometimes—and you would greatly oblige me by sending these letters to Manchester and getting some friend to post them there. Can you?"

"Certainly. My brother will post them with pleasure."

"Thank you. Here they are" (handing Jack the letters). "And do you think your brother would add to the favour by permitting me sometimes to have letters addressed to his care?"

"I have not a doubt of it—if you will kindly say what you would like him to do."

"Merely to forward to you, for me, any letters that he may receive addressed to Miss Roydon, care of—"

"Verelst Brothers, Bankers, Manchester—that will be quite sufficient. Oh! yes, that can be done easily, and my brother will be very glad, I am sure. I had no idea, though, that you had to take so many precautions with your correspondence. I suppose you are afraid of your letters being opened."

"That is one reason, and there are also other reasons which I cannot very well explain—at present. Ah! Mr. Verelst, you are fortunate in being an Englishman."

"But you, too, are English!" said Jack, in some surprise.

"Yes, in one sense. Yet, though only half Russian in blood, I sometimes think that I am wholly so in character and sympathy. It is a strange, melancholy, and, in some respects, a wretched, as it is certainly an unfortunate country. But I

love it all the more because it is unfortunate."

"Unfortunate! Why, Russia is one of the greatest of European Powers."

"I was not thinking of the Russian State, but of the Russian people; and how unfortunate they are, none save those who have lived amongst them can tell. My heart bleeds when I think of the scenes I have witnessed; and they are so good and kind-hearted, too, so unselfish and self-sacrificing, these poor Russian people. I can imagine no nobler task, no more sacred duty, than to aid in their redemption from—"

"What?"

"From the cruel yoke of the Czar, from the worst Government on the face of the earth," said Leah; and albeit she spoke gently, there was a fire in her eye, and an

intensity in her voice, that showed how deeply she was moved.

"With such sentiments as those," said Jack, "I am rather surprised that you should be in Dresden."

"So am I. But we have to yield to circumstances sometimes, Mr. Verelst. I have not been very long in Dresden, and I do not think I shall remain here very much longer."

"Indeed! I thought your father intended to remain here for a considerable time, and eventually to settle in England."

"My father! Yes, I believe he has some such intentions. But I, Mr. Verelst, must be where I can help the cause."

"What cause?"

"The cause of Russian liberty."

"Which means, I suppose, that you will sooner or later, return to Russia and conspire against the Government. But do you

think you are wise, Miss Roydon? Though you had a Russian mother you have an English father, and are therefore an English subject."

"Pray don't say subject, Mr. Verelst; it is a word to which I have a strong objection."

"Well, then, I will say Englishwoman; and I do not see that it is in any way your duty to risk your liberty, and, perhaps, your life, on behalf of what you call the cause. I am sure you would better consult your happiness either by remaining here or going with your father to England."

"Happiness! How is it possible for anybody who thinks to be happy, above all for a—for one who has spent the best part of her life in a land where sadness is in the air you breathe, where the very atmosphere is melancholy, and where every

man is either a slave or a rebel. I never think of happiness, Mr. Verelst, nor ever can, while Russia. . . . But I have no right to inflict my sorrows on you. Let us talk of something more cheerful. Herr Roth, for instance. I cannot tell you how glad I am that the operation has so far succeeded, and that Dr. Roydon has been the means of restoring him to consciousness, and, as we hope, to health and activity. When you see Frau Roth, will you kindly give her my love, and say that, as soon as she can receive visitors, I will call to offer my congratulations? And now shall we have some music?"

Jack declared, with some exaggeration, that he would like some music above all things in the world.

"You must bring your accordion again some evening, and we will have another impromptu concert—you and I and my

father—now that Herr Roth is out of danger. I said just now that I never thought about happiness, and I don't, yet I must make one exception. Music, whether I am a player or a listener, always makes me happy, because it makes me forget. Have you never remarked that the only real happiness is absorption, absorption in something outside yourself? The misfortune is that with me it never lasts long; whenever I think, or remember, the old sadness comes back. Self-conscious people must be very miserable, and, what is worse, ignobly miserable. After all, the artistic temperament is the happiest. Men or women who create, or who would understand the creations of others, should be capable of losing themselves in their work. If I had been born in Italy, and lived in a city full of grand memories and noble monuments, such as Florence or Rome, I

daresay I could have enjoyed life to the full. But we are the creatures of circumstances, and I cannot separate my fate from that of my—adopted country. What shall I play?"

"Anything you like, Miss Roydon. Whatever you choose I shall like."

"How courtly you are," said Leah, with a grave yet gracious smile, as she sat down at the piano. "Well, I will begin with one of Mendelssohn's sonatas."

Jack rose and stood by the instrument, ready to turn over the leaves; but though a book was there, she gave no heed to it; she knew her Mendelssohn by heart, and after awhile she went on to something that Jack did not recognize, but which he conjectured to be either Russian or her own composition—a weird and melancholy air that made him think of the rush of the night wind over the solitary steppes; and then it

became wilder and still more weird, and he saw in imagination one of those savage scenes of which he had read—a vast forest of pines bending to the rising storm, snow everywhere, an angry sunset, drifting clouds, and a sledge with travellers flying before a pack of ravening wolves.

Leah's face—her compressed lips, quivering nostrils, and the half-fierce, half-exultant expression of her eyes—showed that the absorption of which she had just spoken had taken full possession of her, that she was as oblivious of Jack, herself, and the world, as if they had never been. He felt that he loved and admired her more than ever, yet now almost hopelessly, for how, he asked himself, could he speak of love to this girl, whose heart was given to a cause, who had in her the stuff of which martyrs are made, how wish her to accompany him to prosaic Manchester and

devote her life to the performance of humdrum domestic duties? And yet what a grand thing it would be to win such a woman! The thought thrilled him with eagerness and delight. And it would be doing her a true service to prevent her from returning to Russia and engaging in a mad enterprise which could lead only to a gaol or life-long exile in that terrible Siberia whose horrors, like most Englishmen, he held in unspeakable dread. Happen what might, it was almost certain that her life would either be wasted or sacrificed, and, so far as Jack could see, for no good. Her lot as his wife, though less stirring and exciting than that of a Nihilist conspirator, would be happier and more useful. If she could only be persuaded! The end, even for her sake alone, was worth the most strenuous effort it was possible for a man to put forth. When he

thought of Leah, who was now playing an air so sweet and pathetic that it filled his soul with pity and love—when he thought of her as a prisoner of the Czar—when he pictured her, with face so fair, with nature so noble, and soul so pure, rotting in a Russian dungeon, or as a hopeless wanderer in the frozen north, he could hardly contain himself for rage and indignation, and he resolved that, come what might—whether he could win her for himself or not—he would at least hinder the consummation of the useless self-immolation on which she had set her mind.

CHAPTER XXI.

A CURIOUS POINT.

LEAH's playing and Jack's reflections were interrupted by the entrance of Dr. Roydon. He, too, seemed in good spirits, and greeted his guest with hardly less cordiality than on the occasion of the latter's first visit. Yet he did not look like the same man. The incongruity between face and hair which then struck Jack so much, existed no longer. They matched each other; the white hair was a suitable setting for the bibliophile's hollow eyes, wrinkled brow, and tightened skin. It was the face of an old man. In frame, however, the Doctor seemed to be as vigorous as ever,

and the nattiness of his attire, and the pains he bestowed on his toilet, rendered the ravages which age or care had wrought in his appearance less obvious than they might have been.

The talk had naturally reference to the great event of the day—the trephining of Herr Roth; and one of the first questions put by Jack was whether Roydon really thought that the banker would get better.

"I have no two opinions about it. I think, most decidedly, that he will get better. No operation could be more successful, and the patient's condition, when I left, was most satisfactory. Siebold was to see him again, late in the day, and he promised to call and let me know—"

"Herr Dr. Siebold!" said Nettschen, throwing open the door.

"Well, how did you find him, or, rather, how did you leave him?" asked Roydon,

when the forms of politeness had been observed.

"Progressing favourably, which is another way of saying that no unfavourable symptoms have presented themselves," and then he entered into technical details, which there is no need to repeat.

"Satisfactory in every way," was Roydon's somewhat complacent comment on his colleague's explanation. "Herr Verelst has just been asking me if I really think Roth will recover. I say yes, decidedly, and that, I take it, is also your opinion."

"Well, yes. On the whole I may say that it is, Herr Colleague," returned the other, with some hesitation. "But I do not think I am quite as sanguine as you are. True, there is a promising absence of unfavourable symptoms, but only a few hours have passed since the operation, remember, and our patient's vitality is at a

very low ebb. If any accident should happen, or inflammation supervene, it would go very hard with him."

"We must have neither accident nor inflammation," put in Roydon.

"If we can prevent them," returned Siebold, drily. "But we surgeons can only do our best. We can neither see inside a man's brain nor take into consideration every unforeseen circumstance which may affect the condition and influence the fate of our patients. We are only with them a few minutes in the day, and there are few doctors who cannot tell of cases lost through the carelessness, or would-be-kindness, of nurses and friends."

"I think Frau Roth may be trusted to follow instructions, though, and that the nurse from the hospital knows her business."

"Yes. Frau Roth is very good, and Probst is a well-trained attendant; but

even they cannot control events. However, we will hope for the best, for, albeit I do not like to be over-confident, I am no croaker."

"And about Herr Roth's memory, Dr. Siebold," asked Jack; "do you think it will ever come back?"

"Certainly; of that, at least, I have not the slightest doubt—if he lives."

"Soon?"

"I could not quite undertake to fix the day and the hour," said Siebold, "but it may be any time, and will probably occur when least expected. I mean the power of recalling events, for Herr Roth's loss of memory is not absolute. It would be more correct to say that it is impaired than lost. He has not forgotten how to talk."

"Why, I thought that was just what he had forgotten," observed Leah.

"He has forgotten his vocabulary,

which is a very different matter from forgetting how to talk, and that he is rapidly recovering. He hardly hears a word that he does not seem to understand and retain, only they must be spoken separately and distinctly; and the speech-power may at any moment be fully restored."

"Has he picked up any more words since this morning?" asked Dr. Roydon.

"Several. He can ask for food, and knows me, the nurse, and Frau Roth by name, but he evidently does not know her as his wife. But for that I should almost conclude that his memory is unaffected; that he has simply lost, for the moment, the power of putting his conceptions into language. Has it ever occurred to you, Herr Colleague, that the insensibility of our patient may have been a form of hypnotism?"

"You mean that he may have been in a mesmeric trance?"

"Yes, and though incapable of giving any sign, cognizant of all that has been going on about him."

"It is possible. One has heard of hypnotism being produced by pressure on the brain."

"But hypnotism gives rise to illusions."

"Naturally, and sometimes a patient is able to recall both his illusions and his actions, sometimes not. A somnambulist, for instance, may ramble about all night through, and when he wakens be as ignorant of the fact as if he were somebody else. I think that Herr Roth will recover his health, but I very much doubt whether he will ever recover his memory—though I would not for the world say so to his wife," observed Dr. Roydon, thoughtfully. "However, suppose he does, and it turns

out that he has been in a state of hypnotism, and has had visions, fancies—call them what you will—and mistakes them for realities, how then?"

"I do not exactly see the bearing of your question, Herr Colleague," returned Dr. Siebold, with a puzzled look.

"I mean, how will it affect his testimony, as touching the—the—cause of his injuries?"

"The attempt to murder him? I see your idea, and it might become a very curious point in medical jurisprudence."

"So it might, and very probably it will. Suppose, for instance, that Herr Roth, having been in a state of hypnotism, and not absolutely unconscious, has had dreams and visions, and, taking them for realities, accuses the wrong person? It is possible."

"Quite possible!"

"I have already suggested the idea to Frau Roth, and the more I think about it the more probable such a contingency appears—if, as you anticipate, her husband's memory for events should be restored. Let us suppose he did not know his assailant—which is very likely, I think—but confounds him with the last person he did know and thought of before he became hypnotized. It might be our friend Verelst, for instance."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Jack, horrified by so unpleasant a suggestion.

"Or it might be the waiter who brought him his dinner," went on Roydon, heedless of the interruption, "or Herr Anspach; anybody of whom he had been thinking, in fact."

"I hope he won't fix upon you as his murderer, father, or any other innocent person," said Leah, with a visible shudder.

"Me, me! fix upon me!" exclaimed the Doctor, who seemed much disconcerted. "Impossible! You forget that I was away at the time."

"So was Mr. Verelst. At any rate, he was not in the bank, and Herr Roth may just as likely have been thinking of you as of him."

"I don't see that at all," returned Roydon, testily. "He had not set eyes on me for two or three days, and Verelst and the others had only just left him."

"Well, let us hope he won't accuse anybody but the wretch who did the deed," said Leah, earnestly. "I can imagine nothing more dreadful than to be falsely charged with a terrible crime. Do you suppose Herr Roth's power of recalling events—which means in this case his capacity to tell how the bank was robbed and himself so nearly killed—do you suppose

this power will come back gradually or suddenly, Dr. Siebold?"

"Suddenly, I should say. The chain of ideas, dislocated by the shock of that terrible blow, will almost certainly be re-knit by some suggestive word or action; and his memory will come back as if by the stokre of a magician's wand. Don't you think so, Herr Colleague?"

"I daresay. But in my opinion his ideas will be so confused that it will be impossible either for him or us to distinguish the true from the false," said Roydon, impatiently, as if he desired to terminate the discussion.

"That remains to be seen," returned Siebold. "In the meanwhile we must do our best to restore his physical strength, which is at a low ebb, and the brain, like the body, must needs be very weak. The temporary loss of memory is really very

fortunate. He can neither be worried nor excited, and in his present condition excitement might be fatal."

A few minutes later Dr. Siebold took his departure, but Jack remained, and at Roydon's invitation accompanied him and Leah to a concert at the Gewerbehaus.

CHAPTER XXII.

HERR ROTH REMEMBERS.

A FORTNIGHT after the trephining, Herr Roth had improved so much that Dr. Siebold became almost as sanguine about his ultimate recovery as Dr. Roydon himself. True, the patient had not fully regained his memory. He could recall nothing of what had passed before the operation—the whole of that part of his life was still a blank to him—but he could understand a plain question, and give an intelligent and intelligible answer; and though he did not recognize Frau Roth as his wife, he seemed to know that she somehow belonged to him, and in the

tender and childlike affection he showed for her there was something extremely touching and pathetic. He would not willingly let her go out of his sight, and though he could not always take in what was said, there were times when a light from the past appeared to flash across his mind, and he was evidently trying to piece up the severed link in the chain of ideas which should place him in touch with the past.

Reading as yet was quite beyond him. When books were produced he shook his head, as if he had not the slightest idea what they were or he was expected to do.

But one day Helenchen, who had heard that the memory sometimes retains more vividly events long past than things of yesterday, showed her father a child's picture alphabet book, and pointing to the first letter, said "A." Herr Roth's face

brightened at once, and when his daughter pointed to the second letter he said "B," and went through the entire alphabet without difficulty. Then Helenchen taught him to spell, an exercise at which he displayed great aptitude, and it was evident that he would soon be able to read. But Dr. Siebold did not look with much favour on this attempt at tuition, and he strictly tabooed all allusions to the robbery and questions relating thereto.

"We are going on very well," he said, "and I do not want Herr Roth to remember the past, or know what has befallen him until he has more fully recovered from the state of nervous prostration to which he had been reduced, and from which he was relieved none too soon by the operation. Avoid, as far as you can, every word or expression which is likely to set him thinking about the rob-

bery. If you are compelled to enter into any sort of explanation, say that he is recovering from injuries accidentally sustained."

Dr. Roydon had practically left the case in the hands of his colleague. Rather to Frau Roth's surprise, he had called only twice since the operation.

"My work is done," he said. "The operation has been performed, and your husband is in a fair way for recovery. I am not a Dresden practitioner, and it is not right that I should deprive Dr. Siebold of whatever credit the successful termination of the case may bring him. Herr Roth could not be in better hands; but if any unfavourable symptoms should arise, and you or he think I can be of use, I shall be happy to meet him in consultation and do whatever I can."

Frau Roth did not quite understand this

line of reasoning; but, as she remarked to Helenchen, the ways of doctors in matters of etiquette were past any plain body's comprehension, and Dr. Roydon had done so much for them that she really could not ask him to do more.

At the end of the third week Dr. Siebold assented to some relaxation of the precautions on which he had hitherto insisted. One or two friends were occasionally allowed to see Herr Roth, and even to sit a few minutes in his room. He could not recognize them, however, and this fact, together with the scantiness of his vocabulary, rendered conversation somewhat difficult; but their presence seemed to cheer the old man, and afford him a little mild and agreeable excitement, which, as Dr. Siebold thought, was likely to do him good rather than do him harm.

One of these favoured callers was

Colonel Propfenzieher, a veteran of the war of liberation, who had been a fast friend of Roth's father and a faithful customer of the bank for half a century.

"I wonder if your Herr Husband could take a pinch of snuff with me," said the old fellow one day, when he was sitting by Herr Roth's couch. "He often used to do when I called here of an evening, or looked in at the bank."

"Try him, Herr Oberst" (colonel), said Frau Roth; "perhaps he will."

So the colonel produced his box, a huge gold affair presented to him by Field-Marshal Blücher, and after taking a pinch himself, as if to show him how the trick was done, he passed it on to Herr Roth. The latter received the box automatically, stared at it for a moment with a strangely puzzled expression, and then, by a sudden movement, threw it at Propfenzieher's head.

"There is death in it!" he screamed; death in it!"

If Marshal Blücher had appeared before him as large as life, in full uniform, and wearing his famous boots, the colonel could not have looked more utterly astonished. Frau Roth ran to her husband in sheer dismay. She thought he had become either delirious or insane. He was holding his hands before his eyes and murmuring—"A pinch of snuff? No, No! Death! death!"

"What is it, Heinrich—what is the matter?" she said, tenderly.

He uncovered his face, and the moment her eyes met his she saw that he had come to himself. There was the old look in them.

"Thou here, Mary!" he exclaimed, glancing round the room in surprise. "Where am I?"

"In thy own house, dear husband; where else should thou be?"

"But how have I come here? I was at the bank. Ah! yes. I begin to remember: it was that pinch of snuff. But where are the bonds—what has become of the bonds?"

"The bonds were stolen."

"Stolen? That, that was yesterday and —and—I have been asleep ever since!"

"Yesterday! It is eight weeks ago, dear heart, and you have been unconscious nearly all the time."

"Eight weeks—eight weeks! It seems as if I had had a long dream; and in my dream I have seen many things and many people: thee and Helenchen, and Mathilde, and Verelst, and Dr. Roydon, and Oberst Propfenzieher, and—"

"Why, the Herr Oberst is here now."

"So he is. How are you, old friend?"

extending his hand, which the colonel took and affectionately pressed, while tears ran down his furrowed cheeks, partly from emotion, partly from the effects of the snuff, which, when the box was thrown at his head, had got into his eyes. "But" (putting his hands to his head) "have I been hurt? I am stiff and weak, and I almost feel as if I had got some other body's head on my shoulders."

"Hurt! I should think so, indeed. Why, you were nearly killed. Your skull was fractured, and until you underwent an operation three weeks since, you were quite unconscious. It is only just now that your memory has come back."

CHAPTER XXIII.

HOW IT HAPPENED.

"It is very strange. I—I don't understand; let me try to remember!" said Herr Roth, with an intent look, and pressing his hand to his head. "That is it—that is it! The man with the snuff-box. After I took the pinch of snuff, which made me sneeze so, and then stupefied me, he must have struck me on the head and stolen the bonds. The infernal scoundrel! Why, he must have taken twenty thousand marks' worth of bonds! Eight weeks since, you say? Have they been recovered—has anything been done?"

"What could be done when you were in that state? We neither knew who were the robbers nor how the robbery was effected. You must tell us all about it as soon as you are able. But, for heaven's sake, do not get excited; it may be very bad if you do."

"I will tell you now. There is not much to tell; and it will relieve my mind. But how is the bank going on? Eight weeks, you say!"

"The bank is going on very well. As the doctors said it might be a long time before you were able to attend to business, I arranged with Mr. Verelst to take the entire charge, and be responsible for everything. Did I do right?"

"Quite right. It is what I should have done myself. Verelst is an excellent young man. And all is going on well, you say."

"Very well; I get weekly returns of the

business done which you shall see when you are a little stronger."

"Did Dr. Roydon meet his bill? It was due, I think, about the time that scoundrel robbed me."

"Yes, he met it punctually. Not only so, he has been most kind and attentive. It was he who proposed and performed the operation."

"Operation! what operation?"

"The trephining I spoke of just now, to relieve the pressure on the brain. But for Dr. Roydon I question if you would have been alive, and I am sure you would not have recovered your senses."

"Ach! Is that indeed so? I am very glad. You see I was right about that man after all, Mary. You said I did wrong to trust him."

"I thought so, but I was mistaken. Nobody could have behaved more kindly or been a truer friend. I have let him

know that he can take his own time about paying the balance. Did I do right?"

"Quite right. You always do right. Did man ever have a truer wife? God bless thee, Mary!"

"God bless thee, Heinrich!" said Frau Roth, fervently, taking her husband's hand and kissing him fondly. "But you are talking too much. Tell us how it happened, and then you must be quiet awhile."

"How it happened? Oh! yes, the robbery. Well, I had just finished my dinner and lighted my cigar when I heard the door open, and the next moment there came in a good-looking, well-clad gentleman, who, after greeting me with great politeness, asked if I had any municipal bonds to sell."

"There was only one, then. Did you know him?" asked Frau Roth, anxiously.

"I never saw the man before in my life," was the emphatic answer. "Well, he asked me if I had any municipal bonds to sell. I said that I was not quite sure; that they were very much in demand, and I had sold a large number the day before, but I would see. So I put down my cigar, went to the safe, and found in the security drawer more bonds than I expected to find. These I laid on the counter, and proceeded to count.

"'How much if I take the lot?' inquired the stranger.

"I named a price, whereupon he said that it was rather a high figure, and doubted whether the friend for whom he was acting would like to give so much.

"'That,' I made answer, 'is your business. I shall surely not take less, and if you wait you will have to give more.'

"'I really don't know how to decide,' he said, thoughtfully, drawing forth a snuff-box, and after taking a pinch between his finger and thumb—though, as I now well remember, his putting it to his nose was only pretence—he handed the box to me, saying, 'Would you like a pinch, Herr Roth?' And a very strange box it was—gold, with an effigy on the lid, in ivory, of a skeleton, or skull and cross bones, I am not sure which, and the words in black letters—I remember them well—they struck me as being so very ghastly: '*Memento mori.*' I opened the lid, wondering who my customer was, helped myself to a pinch, took it, sneezed violently, and—"

"Yes, and what then?" asked Frau Roth and the colonel, eagerly, and together.

"Nothing more. I remember nothing

more, until just now, when Oberst Propfenzieher offered me another pinch, and I thought there was death in it. Now I recall everything; and I can hardly believe it did not occur yesterday."

"You are quite sure there was only one man?"

"I am quite sure I saw only one."

"What was he like?"

"As far as I can tell you, though I cannot say that I took very particular notice, a man of about forty, middle-sized and broad-shouldered, with dark hair and a full beard and moustache, all slightly grizzled and—yes, he wore spectacles. He spoke excellent German, but not with a Dresden accent, rather foreign, I thought; and I fancied then, and I fancy now, that there was something in his voice not quite unfamiliar to me—that I had heard it before."

"He was well dressed, you say? Did he look like a gentleman?"

"Quite, and his manner was straightforward and business-like."

"Did he—? But I must not ask you any more questions. You have talked quite enough. Now lie down and speak not another word, while I go and prepare your gruel. I leave him in your charge, Herr Oberst. On no account let him talk. See, his face is flushed already."

"You may depend on me. I shall obey your orders to the letter, Frau Roth," answered the old soldier, with a pleasant smile.

"But may he not read the paper to me?" pleaded Herr Roth. "I want to know what has been going on all this time!"

"By all means let him read the paper. It will help to pass the time and keep you

from worrying—if the Herr Oberst would be so kind."

"Your wishes, Frau Roth, are my commands," returned Propfenzieher; and the old fellow opened the door for her with as much alacrity as if he had been sixty or seventy years younger. "I will read the *Anzeiger* to Heinrich until further orders."

When Frau Roth told her daughter that the good father had quite "come to himself," she could hardly contain herself for joy, and she made Helenchen write straightway three letters—one to Dr. Roydon, one to Dr. Siebold, and one to Verelst, informing them of the happy change that had just taken place. In the letter to Verelst she suggested that he should see the Amtsrichter—with whom she had promised to communicate the moment Herr Roth recovered his memory—and say that if he deemed it expedient

he might come up at once and take her husband's evidence, although it was less conclusive than she expected, and was not likely, she feared, to throw much light on the crime, or lead to the discovery of the culprit.

These letters, when written, were sent off to their destinations by a special messenger.

They were not long in producing an effect. Dr. Siebold, the Amtsrichter and his clerk, and John Verelst, put in an appearance within a few minutes of each other. The first to see the patient was naturally the doctor, and after examining him, he decided that his deposition might be taken, provided that the proceeding did not last more than ten or fifteen minutes. On this the others were admitted into the room, and Herr Roth gave his evidence. He gave it under oath, just as

he would have done before a court of justice; his room, in fact, became for the time being a court of justice. When he had made his statement, which was merely a repetition of the tale he had already told his wife, and answered a few questions, it was put into writing and signed, and the four men were shown into the dining-room, where coffee was awaiting them. An attempt on the part of Herr Roth to engage Verelst in conversation about business was peremptorily vetoed by the doctor.

"You have had quite enough excitement for one day," he said; "I almost fear too much. For the present, at least, you must talk no more, and think as little as may be. It would be well for your husband to sleep, Frau Roth. You, or one of your daughters, might read something aloud to him—something light that

will keep his attention without taxing his mind—a story, for instance, or odds and ends of news. Go on reading until he sleeps, but on no account let him talk."

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